

THE FAITH THAT REBELS

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THE FAITH THAT " REBELS

*A Re-examination of the
Miracles of Jesus*

D. S. CAIRNS
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FOREWORD

I was extremely glad when I learned that it was proposed to issue a new edition of this very notable book, and I gladly responded to the invitation to write a foreword which would introduce it to a new generation of readers. This is one of the books that have influenced me greatly and permanently in the never-ending endeavour to think out our Christian faith. At the time when it first appeared, I had, like many others, been looking forward with some eagerness to its publication, for we knew that Cairns had for a long time been saying to his students at Aberdeen something new and enlivening on the subject of faith and miracles, and a savour of it was sometimes borne to us on a wind from the north. I read the book at once, and even if its argument did not carry me with it all the way, I have ever since then regarded it as a book which made me see something that I had not seen before and which must be important for my understanding of Christianity. Probably many others of my generation could say the same. The reviewer of the first edition in the *Guardian* wrote: "At last we have a book on miracles which really moves the problem out of the stalemate into which it had fallen. . . . This is a book of first-rate apologetic

importance and value which may mark a definite step forward in the treatment of this ancient issue." I believe that it did.

A great deal has happened in the theological world since the nineteen-twenties, and the landscape has been transformed more than in most periods of that length. I have sometimes wondered whether, amid a wealth of new insights from new angles, the particular insight which Cairns's book helped to create in the understanding of the Gospels is in some quarters being lost or forgotten. Theology today in its approach to the miracle-stories in the Gospels is apt to be primarily interested in asking: What significance had these stories in the preaching of the early Church out of which the Gospels grew? To what "forms" do they belong in the tradition that was taking shape? What light do they throw upon the nature and content of the apostolic *kerygma*? And what will a truly "biblical" theology (as distinguished from a merely historical interest) have to say about them? These are indeed important questions. And Cairns was not blind to them. His theology was biblical through and through, and the reading of his books makes one exclaim: "How that man knows and understands the Bible, both Old and New Testaments!" Moreover, he is greatly concerned to show that "mighty works" are part of the very *content* of the message of the early Church. But he is even more concerned with the questions (which to him are inseparable from the foregoing, and are not unanswerable): How

did our Lord Himself regard His "mighty works"? What did He hold and teach about the possibility of such things happening? Did they really happen? And if they did, was this something entirely exceptional, confined to the lives of our Lord and His apostles, and perhaps a few great saints throughout the ages, as "miracle-workers" whose exploits were intended to confirm the Christian message? Or is this an integral and permanent part of the message itself, a part often lost from the Church in the past, but now being rediscovered and realized in the faith-healing movements of our time?

To Cairns these questions were vital. In his student days he had passed through a period of agonizing doubt about Christianity, and it was partly through eager study of the Gospels in the light of modern criticism, and especially of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, that he found his way back to faith. Thus to him the miracles were the mighty works of the Kingdom of God, wrought by the power of God made available through human faith, of which Jesus himself was "the pioneer and perfection." Moreover, this whole subject was in Cairns's mind closely connected with his own experience, when, after only a few years of married life, his young wife contracted an illness which finally carried her away. He was thus driven to face the problem of the meaning and conquest of suffering and death, so prominent in the New Testament. At the same time, though he was not a scientist, he was deeply interested in the developments of

modern science, moving away so remarkably from the materialist-mechanistic world-view which had been so widespread and so intimidating. And he had also a profound interest in the modern missionary movement of Christianity, which to him was part of the triumph of the Kingdom of God. All these strains of interest came together in his thinking, and led him to interpret Christian faith as "the faith that rebels" against all evils, material as well as spiritual, and that lays hold of the power of God which is able to give us the victory.

The student of theology may profitably trace this stream of thought from its sources and tributaries to its later reaches in the theology of our time. Thirty or forty years ago Cairns sometimes seemed to himself to be pursuing a somewhat lonely course in theology. But there were certain allies, known and unknown. There was a kinship, and a mutual influence, between Cairns's work and that of his friend Dr. A. G. Hogg, of Madras Christian College, author of *Christ's Message of the Kingdom and Redemption from this World*. An affinity has also been noticed with Bishop Gustav Aulén's interpretation of the original Christian message as a message about God's victorious battle in Christ against the elemental powers of evil, though there was no direct influence in this case. Still more striking is the parallel between Cairns's thought in *The Faith that Rebels* and a certain strain in the quite independent thought of Professor Karl Heim of Tübingen. Any student who is interested in

such matters would find it highly profitable to read, alongside this volume, the chapter on miracles in Heim's recently translated work, *The Transformation of the Scientific World-View*.¹ He may also find an important tributary if he notes that Cairns, Hogg and Heim all acknowledge a debt to the work of a German theologian of a generation ago, Arthur Titius. And all of this is part of the broad and growing stream of thought which in our time is endeavouring to transcend the too narrowly "spiritual" conception of salvation, and to recover the New Testament conception of a total salvation of "spirit, soul and body," and indeed of cosmic redemption. In that whole story, which has now unrolled itself much further, and which still has many unanswered questions, Cairns's book, even if we find in it many things that we should wish to query, has an important place of its own.

Moreover, apart from the theological student's interest in research into movements of thought, this is the kind of book that it is good for us to read. It has a rugged beauty and eloquence, and it has a tonic quality which makes for faith because it is so "full of faith" itself. I hope this new edition may give it a fresh lease of life and make it familiar to a new generation.

March 1954

DONALD BAILLIE

¹ SCM Press London, Harper New York, 1953. Cf. also a much earlier essay on "Supernatural Healing" in Heim's *The New Divine Order*, SCM Press, 1930.



PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

IN the Preface to previous editions of this book I have expressed my obligation to the Trustees of Auburn Theological Seminary, under whose auspices the Russell Lectures on which it was based were delivered, and to the friends who have aided me in its preparation or have helped me to clear my own thoughts on its subject.

In this Preface I should like to make my grateful acknowledgments to those who have reviewed it, and to those who have corresponded with me about it. I had no expectation when it was written, that it would meet with so friendly a reception. It has been made quite clear to me since then that the dissatisfaction with the prevailing theories of the Gospel miracles to which the book gives expression was shared by a much larger number of people than I had supposed, and that the mind of the Church is open on the whole subject in a way that it was not twenty years ago.

It has been interesting to note, also, that among all the many suggestions and criticisms, public and private that have reached the writer not one has questioned the exegetical part of the argument. They have been one and all directed either to the constructive or practical parts of the book. Some of them seem to me to be very much to the point. I make no claim to have completely explored or satisfied myself about the whole range of the argument, and the pressure of daily work has compelled

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me to abstain from applying the central idea of the book, the power of Faith over the outward as well as the inward world, to the difficult and as yet not completely solved problem of the real meaning of our Lord's apocalyptic teaching. I have never felt that the book was more than in the strict sense an essay, with the solution carried as far as at the moment I was able to carry it, and stated at the moment in the hope that others might be able to carry it further. I hope to have made it reasonably clear that neither of the two existing theories, the Traditional or the Modernist, can really be reconciled with the substance of the teaching of Jesus, as it is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, and I have seen no reason since the book was published to depart from any of its essential positions.

The trained philosopher will expect a much fuller handling of the ultimate questions of Theism than he will find explicitly discussed in this volume. There is no full discussion there of the relations between nature and personality, the natural and the supernatural; and the limitation of natural selection as applied to the moral convictions of man, or the hard problem of pain in the animal world, though I hope he may discern an underlying scheme of thought, coherent with itself, though as yet at certain points tentative. I have abstained from dealing more fully with these questions in part from a fear of overloading and obscuring the argument, and have confined myself as far as possible to the immediate difficulties in believing in the miracles of Jesus felt by the thoughtful modern student. The underlying issues can only, I think, be clearly and adequately discussed in their full context in the philosophy of religion. To some of these I hope to return later in another volume. Objection has also been taken to the absence of any detailed use

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of criticism of the Gospel narratives. If it could be shown that the accepted results of that criticism made any material difference to the general argument there would be real force in this objection. But so far as my own limited knowledge goes, the characteristic idea, the power of faith over nature, is present in all the sources. It seemed therefore at this point also unnecessary to load the argument with unnecessary material.

It is clear that the difficulty most commonly felt is that involved in the nature miracles, the Feeding of the Four and Five Thousand, the Walking on the Water and the Stilling of the Storm. Personally, I see no adequate reason to question the substantial historicity of these narratives. It is, of course always possible that details may unconsciously have been exaggerated, narratives duplicated and so forth. The general argument does not imply at any point the inerrancy of the narratives, or as a critic, Professor Raven has said "an uncritical acceptance of all miracles on the sole ground that Jesus is unique and could do anything and everything."¹ I am afraid this is a hasty impression rather than one that has really grasped the whole argument. But I regret to have given so friendly a critic any reason for such a hasty impression. As a matter of fact I think that the narrative of the finding of the stater in the mouth of the fish is probably an unconsciously heightened narrative and that that of the blasting of the fig tree is probably a parable misunderstood by later reports as a miracle.

But I very definitely object to the exclusion of any really significant sign on the sole ground that it is too remarkable to be credible. I think there is perhaps a similar haste in the following statement that the book

¹ *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, p. 252.

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"identifies evil with suffering." I desire to speak very humbly about the great mystery of suffering. It may be that as yet "we have no sounding line for those vast depths." But I would draw a deep distinction between moral and physical evil, in as much as the former is unconditionally evil. No sin ought ever to have been. We cannot say the same of all physical evil. Where there are criminals, there ought to be prisons, and penalties. Yet the better a society becomes the more prison and penalties will go. They are obviously evils though relative evils. It is in this category of relative evils that I would put human suffering generally. As a matter of fact this judgment of it is common to practically the whole human race and finds expression in the Christian conception of heaven as the place where "God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes."¹ The miracles I take to be fragments of heaven, parts of the new divine order appearing in this present world, emergent islets of a new continent that is appearing above the waters, in response like the first creation to the "brooding Spirit" of God.

It is undoubtedly true that suffering can become the means of the highest good, and that faith can therefore even "rejoice in tribulation." But I think we are leaving both Biblical ground, and the ground of ordinary common sense, if we refuse to look on suffering generally as a real though relative evil. I cannot think that Jesus Christ did. Harnack may have put the matter one-sidedly, yet

¹ Professor Strachan's objection to the passage (p. 151) in the book in which it is said that "the positive evils which man endures from the great system of Nature are contingent . . . and are not part of the Eternal order at all," would seem to imply the eternity of suffering even in heaven. (Vide *The Authority of Christian Experience*, p. 69).

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I cannot but think in the main truly, and was it seems to me on sure historical ground, when he wrote: "To him all evil, all misery, is something terrible; it is part of the great realm of Satan; yet he feels the power of the Saviour within him, and he knows that all progress is possible only by over-coming weakness and disease."¹ I am not quite clear, however, in what respect Professor Raven would differ from this summary and the general position of this book, and therefore further discussion of his criticism would be unprofitable.

On the nature miracles in general I would say that it would be unfortunate if any one should be put off the main line of the argument of the book by any difficulty he may feel about their complete historicity. Its main theme is to discover the true interpretation of what our Lord said about Faith and the ideal range of its powers. It is an endeavour to re-open this question and to focus upon it the attention of Biblical scholars and of theologians more competent than myself. If our Lord's teaching about Love is of vital importance for our whole understanding and treatment of man, his teaching about Faith must surely be of like moment for the understanding of the nature and the ways of God. This is, indeed, the central interest of Theism. From the point of view of this book these nature miracles are of religious value because they illustrate and enforce that teaching. They are the kind of deeds one would expect of the "Author and Perfecter of Faith," if all that he said about Faith were true.

But I can understand the position of a man, who on critical or historical grounds finds the evidence for them insufficient. Rejection of the narratives merely on these

¹ *What is Christianity?* pp. 57, 58. (Crown Theological Series.)

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grounds would not seriously affect the general argument so long as the general principle of the ideal power of Faith over apparently adverse eternal nature is admitted. It is only when the nature miracles are ruled out as impossible or ethically unsound, that the issue becomes one of vital importance to the argument.

More than one friend has raised the point as to whether the whole conception of the miracles of our Lord contained in the book does not undermine the principle of order in nature on whose constancy the whole social and moral life of man depends. This, of course, raises the whole issue between the scientific and the religious interpretation of nature and of human life. I hope to deal with this perennial subject also more fully in a volume to which I have referred. I would only say here that I do not believe that, even if the human spirit rose to a far greater range of control over nature by virtue of spiritual development far beyond anything that is now on the horizon, any such irrational chaos would come into being as is supposed. The view of the book is that all such control is in the last resort Divine control. It is wrought by the Spirit of God in answer to the prayer of faith and hope and love. If this were carried to its perfection in the Kingdom of God we should have, I believe, not a chaos but a new order of a freer and larger kind, a transformation of the existing natural order, but still a manifestation of the Divine Reason and Love.

Mr. Weatherhead in a recent attractive and original volume¹ gives forcible expression to a view of the miracles of our Lord, for which he appeals to the authority of Augustine and which I remember to have been expressed in conversation by my old teacher Professor Herrmann.

¹*His Life and Ours.* (Hodder and Stoughton.)

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"A miracle," said the latter, "if it happens, is simply an unclassified phenomenon. You see a will-o'-the-wisp light and you cannot explain it in terms of your ordinary knowledge and so you call it a miracle. But as your knowledge extends and you come to know more about the atmosphere and the gases exhaled by marsh land you are able to bring it under law and it ceases to be a miracle." That there is truth in this view I should not question. All God's ways with man must surely be reasonable ways in the highest sense of reason. But they need not be mathematically calculable ways ! Experience leads one to distrust the men who make diagrams of human history and numerical calculations of the hours and weeks when "Days of the Lord" will come. Nor will it, I think, ever be possible to make an exact science of human history, though that a looser and freer order prevails there than in Nature I am sure. So I question if miracles will ever be made matters of natural law. As I view them they belong rather to the domain of freedom, human and Divine. What the place of Nature will be in the Kingdom of God, no man can tell. It may be as unlike the present as a block of marble to a finished statue. There will be order and beauty in it even though it be a very different order from the apparently rigid uniformities of the cosmos as we know it today. Out of the merely physical order, there has arisen the order of biology and out of the biological order has come the freer and yet, in the real sense, ordered world of human history. Seen from the stage immediately below it each new advance into freedom might well have seemed a step into anarchy. Why should there not be a higher world still, which like each of these earlier stages has its roots in the more rigid domain beneath, and yet has its branches in a freer and

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higher zone? But both question and answer are perhaps too speculative to be urgent.

Another question raised has been as to the view of the personality of Christ which underlies the general view of the book. Does it regard him as simply a man filled by the Holy Spirit of God, or as "God manifest in the flesh" in the full apostolic sense of the words? Again, I would say that I have been unwilling to load the argument with too much theology, and have in the main contented myself with endeavouring to bring out quite plainly the teaching of the Gospels that the "signs" are works of the "Spirit" and not of the inherent divinity of the Son. The latter view seems to me to be simply a gloss invented by later theology without any encouragement from the New Testament itself. But the entire background of my own thought is that there was a real, a new and a unique coming of God to man in Jesus Christ, a true Incarnation.

INTRODUCTION

THE discussion of the problem of the miracles of Jesus seems at present to have reached a kind of stalemate. For a long time past they have been regarded by the Christian Church as essentially evidential portents which were external signs, and had little or no meaning in themselves for the Christian view of God and the world. They belonged to the sphere of apologetics rather than that of theology. They have been looked at from this point of view alone alike by those who accepted and those who rejected them.

The former have defended them as bulwarks of the faith, rather than as part of the faith itself; and those who have abandoned them have done so merely because they were the point at which the scientific and religious views of the world seemed to come into sharpest collision. In order to ease the strain therefore, believing that these miracles were to-day of little direct religious value, they have abandoned them. The intellectual duel has been well maintained by the older school. For those who believe in a living personal God and in human freedom there is really very little of an intellectual case against the miracles of Jesus. But on the other hand the old argument from miracles has no longer the same central position in the Christian apologetics as it used to have. The centre of the

argument for Theism and for Christianity to-day has moved into a new region from that of external proofs. and these are, even by their supporters, now regarded as being only of contributory value. Most modern religious thinkers base the case for Theism solidly on moral values and imperatives, and for Christianity upon the spiritual personality of Jesus. So for a long time past little that is really new has been said on either side, and almost nothing by younger writers. The most interesting recent book on the subject is curiously symptomatic of the general state of the question. In the earlier part of this volume¹ Dr Tennant in a few incisive chapters demolishes the philosophical argument against miracles, but in the concluding part expresses the opinion that, vitally important in earlier days as miracles were as evidence to the first believers, they are of little value for our generation.

On the other hand Modernism has contributed little that is new or important to the negative case. The only important new material that has been adduced by this school has been the knowledge of sub-conscious phenomena which has been gained during the last fifty years. The endeavour has been made to show that the narratives of our Lord's healing miracles can be best explained as mythical exaggerations of the phenomena of psycho-therapeutics, and that the Resurrection has a new light thrown upon it by what we know of phantasms of the living and the dead. I hope to show later

¹ *Miracle and its Philosophical Presuppositions* (London University Lectures, 1924).

that this new knowledge which we have is capable of quite another interpretation.

I cannot think that this stalemate is likely to endure. It seems to me that much deeper interests are involved in the whole question than are at present finding expression, and that the courses of thought are tending in such a direction as will open the whole subject afresh from new points of view.

This volume is an essay towards this end. I have been unable to find solid intellectual standing-ground in either the Traditional or the Modernist position. The former ignores the fact that Jesus Christ is uniformly represented in the Gospels as having a view of His own signs materially different from the view which the Traditional theory defends; the weak point of the latter is, first, that it also ignores the full force of this teaching, and that it tacitly admits certain *a priori* conceptions, which, if consistently carried through, would disintegrate those elements of Christianity which it retains.

Finally, the unconscious suppression of our Lord's own view by both alike seems to me to have serious consequences for the fundamental Christian ideas of God and the world, and also of the range and scope of ideal prayer.

I am well aware that the view which is set forth here has its own difficulties, and its half-solved and unsolved problems. The book is an exploratory essay rather than a dogmatic solution. I shall be content if I am successful in raising and stating the problem, and in inciting others to

carry the solution further than I have been able to do.

The plan of the argument is as follows. I have endeavoured to set forth in some detail the two existing theories of the miracles of Jesus, which I have called the Traditional and Modernist views respectively, to explain them historically, and to indicate in detail their defects. I have then endeavoured to set forth the Old Testament and Jewish groundwork of thought which is universally presupposed in the Synoptic Gospels, without which we cannot possibly understand the significance which these signs had for those in whose presence they were wrought. I have then endeavoured to set forth in detail the uniform view of these signs which was taken by Christ and His contemporaries.

I have then discussed whether this view is wholeheartedly believable by modern men, and finally have in brief outline set forth what seems to me to be the necessary reaction of this view on the doctrines of God, of the world, and man, and its bearing on the solution of the problem of the tragic element in human experience.

I may add, as a personal explanation, that the book owes its origin to the fact that many years ago study of the Synoptic Gospels led me to see that there was more in the teaching of Jesus on the power of faith and the range of prayer than were finding expression in our current Christian thought and practice.

Fuller study, both of the Bible and of theology, has only confirmed and extended this view, and

the pressure of the problem of the world due to the war has caused me to pursue the inquiry as to the changes in our outlook, both as regards thought and action, which would result from our taking this teaching of Jesus and carrying it logically through. The core of the whole book, therefore, is the exegetical section. We have here a clear issue. Does the interpretation which I have endeavoured to set forth give the natural meaning of His words? Did He ever say anything in contradiction of that meaning? Can His words fairly mean anything else? I do not see that they can. I believe, further, that recent developments, both in philosophy and psychology, have almost unawares been effecting great changes in the whole climate of thought, which have rendered both the Traditional and the Modernist views of these "signs" of Jesus obsolete, and that the course of religious thought is sooner or later bound to bring up the whole question again in a new form. The subject therefore demands re-examination by Christian thought from every available point of view. Even a mistaken or defective theory, if rooted in serious thought, must in the end advance the ultimate solution. The main motive of this volume has been the desire to give the words of Jesus about faith their full meaning, and to seek to throw the light of that meaning on the central problem of theism and the mystery of human life.

CHAPTER I

THE RIVAL THEORIES OF MIRACLE —TRADITIONAL AND MODERNIST

THE history of miracles in the Christian Church has been strangely chequered. At first they were regarded as glories of the Christian faith. Nothing can be clearer from the earliest records than that the first generation of believers regarded them as creative and glorious deeds of the Divine Spirit—fragments of heaven and intimations of immortality. They were expressions on the human side of the very genius of prayer, and verifications of the confidence of the Church that it was the “third race,” the new Humanity. So might an Athenian regard the works of his sculptors and dramatists and historians; the age of Elizabeth, the achievements of its voyagers and the *Faerie Queene*; our own time, the victories of commerce and science.

Nothing too can be clearer than that Christ gloried in the great deeds of blessing that God wrought through Him and His disciples. When His disciples came back and told Him that “even the devils were subject to them,” He “rejoiced in the Spirit and said to them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” These healings of tortured minds and bodies were the opening victories in the

great campaign against sin and sorrow which would end in the total destruction of Satan's kingdom. At the end of His ministry the Fourth Evangelist represents Him as saying of the coming raising of Lazarus, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Nothing can be more futile than the endeavours made to-day by well-meaning commentators of both the Traditionalist and Modernist schools to show that Jesus disliked working His signs. He refused utterly to work useless and spectacular signs such as were asked of Him, but gloried in healing the bodies of suffering men, and never shrank from this beloved mission, save when it threatened to interfere with His even diviner work of preaching the Gospel.

Jesus, in fact, seems to have felt towards physical and mental disease precisely as every good modern physician feels towards it. I shall have something to say about this later in Chapter II when we have the evidence more fully before us. Meantime it is enough to say that in this respect He does not differ from the ordinary medical standpoint, nor can we understand Him unless we appreciate this. He always assumes that disease is part of the kingdom of evil, and never once does He give the slightest sign to the contrary. Not only does He try to heal all who are brought to Him, but He sends His disciples forth with a general commission to heal indiscriminately. His unvarying assumption, where there are failures, is that there has not been enough faith either on the part of the healers or of the sick or their friends and neigh-

bours. His underlying idea can only be that God is always on the side of health rather than of disease, and that where the latter triumphs, something is as it ought not to be. There is nothing to be gained by evading or turning down what is the plain meaning of the Synoptic narratives. It is impossible to make coherent sense of them on any other supposition. Surely, also, the discoveries of modern science regarding the true nature of at least the great majority of diseases make this the only rational view. We now know that at least the majority of diseases, if not the whole of them, are due to the existence of minute living creatures who prey upon the human body from within. Man's first great struggle for progress was a fight with wild beasts of prey, wolves, tigers, and lions. His struggle to-day with disease is a struggle with wild beasts also. The only difference is that of the dimensions of the ancient and modern beasts of prey. It would seem to follow inevitably that we can only look rationally upon physical disease as we look upon the devastations of the wild creatures of the jungle. Disease is just as little or as much part of the Divine order in the one case as the other. It is surely as impossible to regard the one as the direct Divine will for man as the other. Indirectly they may both be regarded as part of that objective order which, as we shall see, penalises our ignorance, our apathy and indolence and cowardice, and educates us in better ways. In this sense and in this sense alone are they both together the Divine will for men. But they are evils, none the less, against which all right-thinking men

should wage wise and resolute war, by striking at the real roots of the trouble.

It is not therefore at all surprising that the early Church should have gloried in this particular kind of miracle, and should have set itself to imitate its Master in this, as in deeper respects.

Such "miracles" were regarded as works and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, proofs that God was with the infant Church in its great enterprise. It is impossible to read the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians with an open mind, and not to see that this is the underlying view of the charismata or "gifts" of the Spirit, which mark out the Church as a Divine institution. In a writing of another branch of the Christian Church than the Pauline, the Epistle of James, we have the same underlying ideal practice.

"When any one is sick [note the universality of the expression], let him call for the elders of the church. They shall lay their hands on him, and anoint him. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and his sins shall be forgiven him." The Jewish colour here is stronger than in the Pauline Epistle, but the drift of it is the same.

Harnack¹ says that this was the ordinary Christian method of healing disease, until well down in the third century, when it was abandoned for what by that time had no doubt proved the more immediately effective method of striking at disease from the physical side of the psycho-physical organism, which method came in from the Greek culture; and he says that it was part of that fusion of Christian faith with Gentile thought and practice

¹ *Medicinisches aus der ältesten kirchengeschichte.*

which led to the development of Catholicism. The practice of maintaining official exorcists, which persisted in the Church for centuries, was a rudimentary survival of this early practice of healing all diseases by prayer which we find exercised in the New Testament. The beautiful chapters on the subject in Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity* give a moving picture of the hopes and aspirations of the early Church on this whole matter.

It is plain that all this is in full continuity with the Synoptic account of His "miracles," and that the early Church believed itself called to carry on the same mission as Jesus Himself practised, and which He commissioned His first disciples to carry on in His Name.

Not only did the early Church believe itself commissioned so to do, but it had no doubt as to its own powers.² Whatever theory we may have as to the authenticity of the closing section of St Mark's Gospel: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In My Name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 17, 18)—there can be no real question that these words express the belief and practice of the first Christian century.³ Taken in connec-

² See Appendix A.

³ So Prof. Allan Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel*, commentary *in loco*. The full passage is as follows: "This is the experience of the Early Church, which fully believed itself to possess these powers in Matt. x., Luke ix. 10. In Mark's charge (iii. 15,

tion with the Synoptic narrative generally, with the Pauline Epistles, and with the Epistle of James, and what has been preserved of the earliest literature of the Church, they seem to me to leave no reasonable doubt as to the matter.

How long this period of optimistic and courageous faith lasted, I am unable from my own knowledge to say precisely. Certainly it extended far beyond the period in which the bulk of the New Testament writings took form. Harnack, as we have seen, puts the abandonment of this method in the third century, and traces it to a deviation from primitive Christian orthodoxy and custom.

But gradually these and the other phenomena of the Spirit diminished: "It was in the primitive days of Christianity, during the first sixty years of its course, that their effects were most conspicuous, but they continued all through the second century, though in diminished volume. The Montanist movement certainly gave new life to the "Spirit," which had begun to wane; but after the opening of the third century, the phenomena dwindle rapidly, and instead of being the hallmark of the Church at large, or of every individual community, they become merely the equipment of a few favoured individuals. "The common life of the Church has now its priests, its altar, its sacraments, its holy book and rule of faith. But it no longer possesses 'the Spirit and power.' As the

vi. 7) much less is claimed, and the deficiency is here made good. On Tongues, see Acts ii. and 1 Cor. xiv. On Exorcism, see Acts xii. 17, 18, 19. On recovery from poison of serpents, Acts xxviii. 3-5; healing the sick, James v. 14."

proofs of 'the Spirit and of power' subsided after the beginning of the third century, the extraordinary moral tension also became relaxed, paving the way gradually for a morality which was adapted to a worldly life." ⁴

From this time on, miracles of healing became more and more wonderful exceptions, being associated with personalities of outstanding force or reputed sanctity, or with certain places which have acquired, mainly through some saint or apparition, a peculiar reputation for healing power. It was, of course, quite inevitable under these circumstances that they should change in character, and instead of being regarded as part of the normal manifestation of the Father's love, should instead become evidential portents, extraordinary proofs of His Divine favour for certain saints, and evidences of the Divine function of the Catholic Church. We pass by gradual transition into the luxuriant wilderness of mediæval myth and legend.

Into this field it is unnecessary to travel. Up to this point miracles are still regarded as glories of the faith, and, in so far, the uniform view of the New Testament and the early age is maintained. But they are rather glories of God's power than glories of His universal love. They are the normal accompaniment of the lives of the saints, and are miracles both of judgment and of mercy designed to awaken and to increase faith. As yet the critical spirit was asleep, so there was little limit to credulity. To those who believed in the stupendous and constantly repeated miracle of the Mass, it

⁴ Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity*.

was in no way improbable that the most extraordinary things should happen in the lives of the saints, or after their deaths in contact with their relics or at places associated with their presence. The mediæval mind had no difficulty about the credibility of miracles. Like the mind of the earlier ages, it believed, also, in miracles wrought by the powers of evil, as well as by the powers of good.

With the Reformation a change began, and a more critical temper began to show itself regarding ecclesiastical miracles. The Lutheran and Reformed theologians could not look with the same eyes as their opponents upon the immense multitude of miracles which were believed to have manifested Divine power through those who, the Reformers believed, were on the side of Antichrist. Therefore, where these did not ascribe them to monkish invention, so far as they took note of them at all, they tended to ascribe them to demonic agency.

Luther believed profoundly in the power of believing prayer. His own prayers were believed to have recovered Melanchthon from a mortal illness. He says boldly in one of his great treatises that if we had faith enough, there is no disease that we could not cure. Nor had the Reformation theologians any difficulty about the New Testament miracles, nor, so far as I know, about the miracles of the early Church. The modern period only begins with the dawn of Rationalism, the gradual rise of the scientific conception of nature, and the growth of the critical spirit.

This put the religion of the eighteenth century in an acute difficulty on the whole subject of the

miracles of the New Testament, and has since been the main factor in causing that extraordinary revolution of feeling which has transformed them from being glories of the faith of all, to being burdens on the faith of many modern Christians.

We can best see the whole situation of the time mirrored in the works of its two most powerful writers, Gibbon and Hume. Hume's argument, briefly put, is that the only conceivable way in which miracles can be proved is by human testimony. But the course of nature is proved by all experience to be unvarying, whereas testimony is proved by experience to be very liable to error. Nature is therefore more to be trusted than testimony. Therefore miracles can never be proved. It is clear that the argument would prove a great deal more than what is reasonable. It is enough for our purpose that it would prove out of hand that the Jesus of history never existed, for He is historically just as unique as any of His works.

Gibbon's case, however, shows the very real difficulty in which Protestant orthodoxy was now placed. The official Anglican position was that the miracles of the New Testament age were historical, and were granted as portents evidential of the truths which it taught. They were continued for a time that the young Church might be well founded. Similar but fewer signs were granted to the fourth or fifth century, and were later withdrawn as being no longer necessary. Enough in all were granted to authenticate the Divine approval of the Fathers of the early centuries, the standard of Anglican orthodoxy. By this convenient method the Roman

conceptions were condemned and the Anglican standards maintained. So flagrantly dogmatic a construction of history failed to hold the youthful Gibbon's mind, which was aroused from its dogmatic slumber by Middleton's attack upon the veracity of the ecclesiastical miracles. Unwilling to leave the Christian faith and yet compelled to see that even the Fathers of the fourth or fifth century were sacerdotalist, he was driven to join the Church of Rome. But as his mind expanded and the spirit of his age entered into him, he found the Roman position untenable, and in the counter-recoil abandoned miracles altogether.

Now, apart altogether from the spirit of the age of Rationalism, and apart altogether from the fact that neither Gibbon nor Hume was temperamentally a religious man or had any desire to find God in history, it is clear that a great transformation had come over the whole idea of miracle since the early Christian age. The orthodoxy of the day was generating a view of it which is not really the view of the Synoptic Gospels, nor that of Jesus Himself. The view which Gibbon and Hume were rejecting is one which has only secondary interest for the modern Christian. The mediæval Church had spoiled the conception, but it was centuries before the Protestant Church realised the fact.

We have now in our review of the history reached the present-day situation. To-day we may say broadly that two conceptions struggle for the mastery—the Traditional and Modernist. I shall endeavour to state them both in their clearest form, though there are intermediate positions.

The Traditional view is in principle substantially the same as that taught by the Scholastic theologians of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The miracles of Jesus are true narratives of historical events. Their purpose was evidential; they were meant to give convincing evidence that God was on the side of Christ. Many traditionalists would put them more simply still, and would say that they are direct expressions of our Lord's Divinity, acts of creative power that could only be wrought by a Divine Being. They are, in any case, meant to authenticate His teaching and mission as Divine. They are not parts of the message, but proofs of its truth. They are seals attached to the document, not parts of the document. They are the crier ringing his bell to call attention to his message. The essential thing here is that they should be signs of Divine Power. Only this can make them unmistakably Divine. So was it with the miracles of Jesus, and above all, with His Resurrection. The crier rang His bell so hard that the contemporaries could not choose but hear. So was it also with the miracles wrought by the disciples. These were, one and all, evidential in character. Standing as the disciples did for Jesus Christ, power was graciously granted them by the Almighty to meet the exceptional circumstances, and to support them as they faced their mighty task of overcoming the world. It is assumed that it was revealed to them at the time the miracle was wrought, that God was willing to endue them with this exceptional power for the moment and the occasion. The whole reasoning turns on the idea

that the miracles were exceptional, and that they were convincing portents. They were thus phenomena quite distinct from Divine providences or ordinary Divine answers to prayer, which were meant to be normal experiences in the life of the Christian. A distinction commonly drawn by the maintainers of this view was that, while in His Providence and in hearing prayer God worked through nature, in working miracles He, as it were, interfered with the course of nature, or "suspended" it.

Did miracles continue into early Christian times, and if so, when did they cease? Here Traditionalists are divided, not so much by reason of historical evidence as by virtue of the general religious view of authority which they hold. The orthodox Roman Catholic holds that these miracles have never ceased, but have been granted all the way down through history, and happen still, as, for example, at Lourdes, and the Holy Houses of Einsiedeln and Loreto. The Anglican position is not so definite or uniform. I have been unable, except in the case of Newman and Ward, to find that the Tractarians dealt much with the Patristic miracles. Many Anglo-Catholics to-day believe in the general continuity of the miraculous. In general, Anglican opinion is coloured on the one hand by respect for the testimony of the Fathers, and on the other by a general distrust of Mediævalism. Protestant Evangelical Christianity in the main would put the terminal period about the close of the New Testament age. In the case of the latter schools of belief, the cessation of miracles is ascribed to the disappearance

of the need for such exceptional manifestations of the Divine Power. The underlying idea of this, historically, was that such exceptional manifestations were dangerous. The quaint phrase in use among those who first developed the traditional Protestant view, was that God made a "sparing use" of miraculous powers. I have no doubt that, as so often happened in theology, the political ideas in vogue in England during the period coloured the religious thought. The universe was regarded as a kind of British Constitution in which the normal government was carried on by the Reign of Law. When the Constitution got deadlocked, the sovereign intervened. But while this was provided for under the sanction of emergency, it was his wisdom to intervene as briefly and as sparingly as possible, and as soon as possible retire to his normal position as a "limited monarch."

I have endeavoured as fairly as possible, then, to outline the Traditional position. It has its strong points. It seems to conserve a due respect for the formidable uniformity of nature along with a recognition of the reality of miracle, and the possibility of a living Providence and the reality and power of prayer. It seems a safe mediating position, which does not put too great a strain upon belief on the one hand or on scientific necessities on the other, and it has all the advantage of being already in possession of the mind of the Church. Yet I do not think it can really bear close examination in the full light of present-day thought. It is too artificial, too obviously a compromise framed to avoid certain controversial extremes. It does not arise naturally out of the Gospel narratives, or out of the scientific necessities,

but out of the historical situation in the century in which it originated. The weakness of it to-day is that that situation has changed. Science has filled up the many gaps in its own construction of the physical world, and is throwing out saps and parallels into the sphere of the psychological, and historical study of the New Testament period has greatly developed. The ideas which underlie its literature are much more fully understood. The traditional view of our Lord's miracles might, and no doubt did, satisfy the religious consciousness of scientific men of its own time, but that it does not so satisfy many of them to-day the growth of Modernism demonstrates.

But what, it may be asked, are the main difficulties of the Traditional view? (1) The first of these, I think, is that it does not really correspond to the New Testament idea of the miracles at all. It is a meaning imposed upon the New Testament by a supposed apologetic necessity. It is thus read into the Gospels rather than out of them. I shall endeavour to show this in detail in a subsequent chapter. Meantime, it may be enough to point out that the picture of Jesus as one who works Divine wonders for the purpose of calling attention to His message is strangely out of harmony with the Synoptic pictures. Over and over again in these narratives He refuses to work just such signs as the Traditionalist theory declares the miracles to have been, and condemns the spirit which demanded them as that of "an evil and adulterous generation." The latter adjective is taken from the Prophets, and means a generation in its heart alienated from spirituality and God. Spiritual truth is spiritually discerned by the child-

like heart, not forced home upon dazzled senses and stunned minds by the blows of supernatural power. The story of the Temptation turns precisely upon this distinction between portents of power and signs of God's love and mercy, which by their own beauty attract "a free man's worship" as worthy of the Supreme.

The conception of Christ as a heavenly bellman is grotesquely out of keeping with Him of whom it was said, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall His voice be heard in the streets," a prophecy which is applied to Him by St Matthew. He is no herald with his tabard and trumpet, blaring and declaiming his monarch's commands, but a Son revealing His Father's ideal and heart towards the wandering children of men. "A true poet," it has been truly said, "does not write his poems in order to show that he is a poet. If he does he shows by so much that he is the less of a poet. He writes them because he cannot help it." So Jesus works His miracles because He cannot help working them, out of the sheer creative faith and hope and love within Him, which bring God in His healing power and man in his suffering and sorrow together.

(2) In some respects even more serious is the way in which the Traditional theory blunts the most remarkable feature of the Synoptic narratives, their steady reiteration of the close and vital relation between the works which Christ wrought and "faith." How large a part this plays in the Synoptic narratives will appear in the following chapters. The main object of this volume is to call

attention to this feature of the New Testament stories. That it is even yet so imperfectly recognised is due, I think, largely to the fact that the Traditional theory, in the light of which these stories are read, can get along quite well without laying any emphasis upon faith as the condition of the signs. Indeed, to some extent the view that the miracles are essentially manifestations of power so great that it must be Divine, is uncongenial to this insistence on this simple human condition, the absence of which is able apparently to set bounds to the manifestation of the power of God.

(3) Most of all must this be the case with reference to that form of the Traditional theory which ascribed the miracles of Jesus not to His perfect manhood, which makes it possible for the Spirit of God to work through Him, but to His essential Godhead resuming as it were its Divine power and acting, as is the Divine way, creatively in the world of space and time. Against this form of the Traditional theory we have not only the constant emphasis upon faith of which I have spoken, but the final and fatal fact that He transmitted His unique powers to mere men; and that St Paul had manifestly a totally different conception, which is expressed in his doctrine of the Spirit, and the charismata of the Church; and that finally it is quite without support from the texts themselves.

(4) The moment we begin to think out the Traditional view, and to account for the cessation of the miraculous gift, we come into insuperable difficulties. No matter what date we choose for

that momentous cessation, whether we put it about the fifth century, or at the close of the New Testament Canon, or within the lifetime of the Apostolic generation, the difficulty is the same.

The root idea is always that miracles are dangerous, a kind of heavenly explosive that may wreck the safe established order! Anything more grotesquely unlike the Apostolic outlook it would be difficult to imagine. It is eighteenth-century English Whig Constitutionalism, not the spirit of the Judean and Galilean dawn!

The explanation given is that the task of the early Church was so momentous and so difficult and perilous as to demand special aid from God. Hence these sporadic outbursts of Divine power were granted, for a comparatively brief period, and then withdrawn. One may fairly say to supporters of the view that miracles ceased with the New Testament age, Was not the Church in the following centuries in even greater extremities in its fight with Gnosticism within and the destroying fury of the Empire without? To others we may say, Why should the third, the fourth, or the fifth century have been the terminus—why, for instance, were there no miracles to prevent the Church from going astray in the critical sixteenth century, when its unity was again broken? One may say to them all, Is not this theory of an unconditional Divine withdrawal of miraculous powers altogether too artificial? Let us remember that no warning of such Divine withdrawal was ever given. Up to this period of privation, of reduction to an order less rich in Divine manifestation, it was regarded as high

virtue and faith to hope for and to attempt such Divine signs. To hope for it after this period was to ask too much, to be out of touch with the new and more straitened reality, and yet no warning was ever given. Men were left to find it out by heartbreaking and faith-shattering failures.

The truth is, that here the Traditional theory will not fit the realities. Surely Harnack has given us a simpler and more satisfying solution in the passage quoted in last chapter. The miracles of the Spirit did not cease because of an unconditional Divine fiat; "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." The miracles of the Spirit gradually ceased, because by compromise with the world the Church got out of touch with the pure grace of God. It no longer possessed the strong, unconventional faith of the first generation.

(5) Finally, the course of history has shown since these days, that wherever great spiritual personalities endowed with primitive energy of faith have arisen, faith has still been able to move mountains in the world of circumstances as well as in the world of the Spirit. The cumulative force of these considerations seems to me overwhelming.

I submit that the Traditional theory needs reconsideration. I recognise to the full its merits and achievements. It has maintained the essential thing, faith in the historical character of the facts recorded in the Gospels, but it has, it appears to me, done so at too great a cost, and has to-day been felt by very many unsatisfactory, even for the apologetic purpose for which it was framed.

So, throughout Christendom, there has arisen a new theory, which dates from the nineteenth century, the theory of Modernism.

THE MODERNIST THEORY

What in its outlines does this theory maintain ? It originated in dissatisfaction with the Traditionalist theory. What was the ground of its dissatisfaction ? It is not possible, within the limits of a brief sketch such as this, to go into all these reasons. To do so would carry us far into its antecedents in the great Rationalist movement of the eighteenth century. But there is no doubt that in our day the Modernist criticism of miracle is mainly due to its apparent conflict with physical science. Science has definitely established itself within the commonwealth of human knowledge. The technique of modern industry and commerce rests upon it, and so do the healing and other practical arts. On the other hand, deeply religious men, as many of the great Modernists have been, know well the vital importance to the soul of humanity of the great Christian ideals and faith. They believe that any conflict between science and religion must needs be a supreme disaster. This attitude to miracles is part of a projected concordat between science and religion. What in its essence is that concordat ? The originators of the Modernist concordat believed that science had its true domain in the physical world, the world that was capable of being weighed and measured ; and that within this dominion science had one

universal principle of interpretation, the reign of law, or as it was otherwise called, the uniformity of nature. Translated into other terms, this means that the presupposition of all physical science is that nature is one closed system of universal causation. Science is the search for causes and for laws of their operation, the endeavour to show in detail that everything is "governed by law."

Now on this view the miracles of the New Testament must needs be regarded as anomalies. The Traditional theory regarded them as simply acts of God. It was essential to this view that the miracles should be inexplicable in terms of ordinary causation. Inasmuch as the causal system failed to account for them, they must be traceable to the Author and Lord of nature. Here there appeared to be a clean breach between the legitimate demand of science, its fundamental principle that nature was a uniform system, and the indispensable requirement of the Traditional theory that the physical causal system should be overruled, that Jesus should heal the sick, raise the dead, walk on the waves, and still the storm. The conflict between what was believed to be virtually an axiom of science and the very core of the Traditional theory of evidential portent appeared to be definite and absolute, and the framers of the Modernist concordat addressed themselves to the solution of the problem. They asked, first of all, was it really worth while for Christianity to stand by these physical miracles? They accepted, like the Traditionalists, the view that the miracles of Jesus had value only as evidential portents of Divine

power. But, plainly, if this were so, the growing prestige of science, with its dogma of the uniformity of nature, was continually depriving them of that evidential power. They might still be held as pious opinions by believers, but they were of little use for the convincing of doubters touched by the scientific spirit. The fundamental question was raised as to whether it was really a spiritual and good thing to coerce faith by logical argument. Did not this make religious certainty a thing for the wise and prudent rather than for the childlike spirit? Spiritual truth, it was argued, must be spiritually discerned. Did not Jesus Himself teach this? The sayings which Jesus applied to the kind of signs desired by Scribes and Pharisees were applied to all His miracles, and so the picture of Jesus as one who disliked working "signs and wonders" then came into being, and was forced into the interpretation of the Gospels, in a most dogmatic and unhistoric way. The Traditional theory had already made the too obvious distinction between ordinary answers to petitionary prayer and miracle, and the Modernist theorists continued that unfortunate distinction, and suppressed the obvious fact that Jesus believed that prayer could alter the course of physical nature, and had inserted in His model prayer a petition for daily bread. They abandoned the physical signs wrought by Jesus as unhistorical, and, with these, the idea that prayer could in any way affect the outward course of nature. If such a practice were sanctioned in the New Testament, it could only be with the view of the petitioner gradually praying himself

into submission to that divinely ordered course of nature. In the nature of the case its action could only be reflex action on the mind of the petitioner.⁵

What the Modernist view makes of Christ's conception of the Fatherly providence of God—"Be not anxious for the morrow, your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things," "the very hairs of your head are all numbered"—I do not know. I have never seen the question fairly faced. I do not see how it can possibly be harmonised with the general position that nature is a closed system, in virtue of which all miraculous happenings in the sphere of nature are excluded, and all prayer for external success is discouraged, or admitted only under impossible psychological conditions.

But while the whole physical environment of the human spirit is thus handed over to science and the unbroken causal laws, the Modernist theory stands firmly by the true autonomy of the inner life of man's spirit, and for the open road to God's personal intervention in the inner experiences of the soul. Eucken, for example, bases his whole philosophy on the new birth, Martineau maintains a real efficiency of the Divine Spirit within the psychical realm, and Harnack does the same.

It is part of the faith of Modernism that while no man has the right to expect God to come to his help in the world of outward circumstances, He can so help him by reinforcing all his inner moral energies as to enable him to triumph over

⁵ For a striking example of this see F. W. Robertson's Sermon on *Prayer*, vol. iv. p. 23.

his trials and temptations, and so make the very outward ills themselves instruments of a higher good. In all these affirmations the Modernist view shows itself essentially Theistic and Christian ; only in the theory of nature, which is involved in its rejection of all physical miracle, does it depart from the New Testament position. In many ways the Modernist school has done conspicuous service to the Christian cause in our modern world. Theism had no more powerful upholder in the difficult mid-Victorian time than Martineau, and to-day not a few of the ardent philosophical defenders of a spiritual view of life come from the Modernist camp. In the political and social life of the age there are no greater and more honoured representatives of the Christian values than some who have found their spiritual home in Liberal Christianity. The Modernist compromise has kept many troubled minds from making shipwreck of their faith, and can never be regarded by any one familiar with the life of our time and concerned with its main spiritual problems and issues, without sincere respect and gratitude. We live in an age of transition when, above all else, it is well to remember our Lord's words, "He that is not against you is for you"; and that on many of the greatest moral and spiritual issues the followers of Liberal Christianity have been in the very van of the fight, and sometimes beyond it, it is happily impossible for any one who knows the facts to deny.

But when one turns from the individuals to the intellectual system and asks whether the delimita-

tion of frontiers which Modernism has supported is really tenable to-day, it is another matter. It is not really a frontier determined by the physical conditions but one which is dictated by the exhaustion of the combatants, and which, as soon as they have recovered their energies, they are bound to abandon. It is really impossible to cut the unity of the world into two clearly divided halves in this way, to assign the world of physical nature to the sway of the causal nexus, and the psychical and spiritual world to autonomy and the Divine Spirit. Neither religion nor science can long consent to a truce so hollow, indeed it has long been visibly breaking up before our eyes.

Science has gained greatly in boldness since the Modernist concordat first took form, and has extended its methods into the realm of psychophysics and psychology proper. We are at the moment face to face with the new determinism of modern psychology both in the Behaviourist theories and in Freudian psycho-therapeutics. To warn it off from this territory and repel it to the Victorian limits is impossible. On the other hand, can religion and ethics really rest content with that conception of physical nature as a closed and uniform system which is really at the very heart of the Modernist concordat?

I shall have to examine this question in detail later. Meantime it is enough to say that, if logically carried through, the closed system idea of nature makes an end not only of miracle and the power of prayer to influence the ordinary course of events, but of human freedom, and any real individual

guidance and providence of God in human affairs.

But holding discussion of this over meantime, I shall confine myself here to the question of whether the Modernist exclusion of physical miracles from the Gospels leaves the real picture of Jesus intact, or vitally modifies it and changes thereby the whole conception of God, and the whole colour of the Christian life.

We have here to face a notable modification which of late years has, almost without notice, taken place in Modernism. The older type rejected all the physical miracles indiscriminately. If we go back to the literature of the Tübingen school of New Testament criticism (and the famous *Leben Jesu* of Strauss), we find the healing miracles grouped with the rest, and wherever a narrative in the Gospels or the Acts contains such narratives, it is at once suspect, and the batteries of criticism are brought to bear upon it, as either mythical or legendary. In this the writers followed faithfully the spirit of the materialistic science of their day, which did not admit of the possibility of anything analogous to the New Testament miracles of healing in current experience. Of course this compelled a much more drastic handling of the text of the Gospels than is to-day necessary.

To-day the position is completely changed. We now know much about the reciprocal relations of mind and body, the singular phenomena of hypnotism, suggestion, faith-healing, and psychotherapeutics, which have brought these healing miracles of Jesus within range of our experience.

The simple truth is, that in spite of the rough distinction between organic and functional maladies which medical science still draws, and which an extension of the powers of the microscope any day may modify, we do not really know the limits of the ideal power of the mind over pathological conditions. Modernism has here partially followed the lead of science, and is now willing to accept many, if not all, of the healing miracles of Jesus. But again, it patiently accepts the limits which our present-day experience still sets. We have no real analogies to the walking on the waters and to the control of the storm, and we have certainly none to our Lord's Resurrection, and so applying the standards of our everyday experience and making them the limits of the credible, these narratives are treated precisely as those of the healing miracles were treated seventy years ago.

One question, however, it may be noted, is completely ignored. Is this undetermined influence of mind over body, which is now conceded, really capable of being harmonised with the closed system idea of physical nature? I fail altogether to see that it can. How can mind have real power over bodily tissue and energy within a closed physical system? We seem to have a direct contradiction in terms. But if the system of physical nature can be deflected by the mind of man, is it really coherent thinking to say that it is unscientific to believe that its course cannot be influenced by the Mind and Will of God?

But passing by this very pertinent point for the moment, and accepting the changed point of view of Modernism, does the clearing out of the nature

miracles, and above all of the Resurrection of our Lord, from the sphere of the historical, leave the picture of Jesus in essentials just what it was before?

Let every one read these Synoptic Gospels anew—and let him get the full picture of Jesus as they present it fresh in his mind, in all His glorious war not only with the sins of men, but with the whole tragic element in human experience, suffering, sorrow, and death—His victories over the destroying powers of nature, plague, famine, and storm, culminating in His final victory over the grave—and he will understand the victorious energy of the first great Christian enterprise, the glow of confident optimism and power with which it adventured forth on its mission of carrying the Gospel to every creature, and swept on, overleaping the wellnigh impassable barrier of Jewish nationalism, from Jerusalem to Antioch, and from Antioch to Rome. If we can once overcome the instinctive difficulty about miracles of any kind, the whole story reads like a unity, it makes the impression of being real history, much more than the laborious Modernist reconstructions of it based on the idea that the empty grave was a mistake.

If Jesus actually wrought these victories not only over human sin but human tragedy, we can understand why the Apostles called Him “the Prince of Life,” and why the first great real difficulty was not why He should have risen again, but why He ever came to be subject to death at all. For that this was their real problem, the least study of the Acts and the Pauline and Petrine Epistles must make plain. How are the truly astonishing vitality,

hope, and power which Jesus communicated to His disciples explained in the Modernist lives of Jesus ? Do they really account for the spirit of the first Christian generation ?

We have had quite a number of these attempted biographies of Jesus all written on the assumption that the miracles of Jesus were quite immaterial to the historical figure, and could be omitted without injury to the substance of His message. These range through all the shades of Modernism, from Strauss and Renan on to Oscar Holtzmann, Frenssen, Middleton Murry, and other popular writers. The trouble with one and all of these is that the figure they present is really quite different from the figure in the Synoptic Gospels, as different as the rather feeble Jesus of most modern painters is from the transfigured Christ of Raphael. The figure in the Gospels is full of victorious energy and power over all the dark and tragic elements in life. He is "prince of life" and victor over death. When He submits to the cross and grave, it is out of His own freedom. But in the Modernist lives the tragic element in physical nature is regarded as irresistible and immovable by even the faith, love, and prayer of Jesus. So the death of Jesus becomes a physical fate rather than a freely chosen spiritual destiny. He goes as a victim to death, not as a conqueror giving His rights away. The ideal Christian temper then becomes a noble stoicism towards all outward ills, rather than a conquering optimism. How on this view Jesus is supposed to be able to heal disease, Modernism leaves entirely unexplained.

Let any one read the Gospels afresh, and see if their whole spirit is not one of conquering optimism. They record the greatest attack in all history on sin and death. It is only in this double context that we can really understand the story, or see the place in it of the miracles and the Resurrection. Not only unbelief, hatred, and despair, but disease, famine, storm, and death itself, go down before the Prince of Life. What though the story remains unfinished? It looks towards the final victory over all sin and all mortal tragedy, which is symbolised in apocalyptic language as the Return of the Lord.

Now, turn from these Gospels and read the same story as it appears under the Modernist necessity of excluding miracle. Such books often give us a moving and noble picture of Jesus of Nazareth, but the whole ethos has been subtly changed. He has broken out of the tyranny of sin, but, just like the rest of us, is subject to the full human entail of disease and death. His crucifixion is not a freely chosen destiny. It is a fate: and the whole story of the Resurrection is due to the fond illusions of the disciples, for which indeed we must hold Him partially responsible, because of the exaggerated estimation of Himself and His powers which He taught and encouraged. Indeed I can never read even the best Modernist accounts of what happened at the resurrection without feeling that the whole story is extraordinarily depressing. There hovers around it a neurotic element of ecstasy, hallucination, and over-belief, which enables us perhaps to acquit Him of full responsibility for the

pathological condition into which His disciples came, but which inevitably suggests that in Jesus we had one who should rather have been taken care of than crucified. Master and disciples alike should have been under medical supervision. "Sacred moments," said Renan, "in which the passion of one possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!"

In reading the Modernist accounts of the whole Resurrection period, we are moving in the atmosphere of a clinique, a bog of neurosis. This, of course, quite suits the general view of Materialism, but it goes ill with the Christian faith which inspires Modernism. And it suits very ill with the history, with the breadth, sanity, and insight of the Galilean mission and the magnificent vitality and power of the early Church, which, we all alike admit, was recreated by the faith in the Resurrection.

The many ingenuities of Modernist writers at this point betray their uneasiness. It is denied, for instance, that St Paul means anything more by the Resurrection of Jesus than that the Spirit of Jesus ascended to the Father. As if every orthodox Jew of the time did not believe in the survival and escape of the spirit at death; as if St Paul, like every orthodox Jew, did not believe that the death of the body resulted from sin! A mere spiritual escape of the spirit would never have satisfied his demand that the Redeemer should wholly have overcome death. As if, finally, the plain meaning of the whole Resurrection narrative in First Corinthians did not mean that Jesus rose again in the full sense that His body rose in transfigured form! The idea

of Christophanies inspired by the risen Christ, the telegram theory of Keim, is almost as hopeless. It would mean that while Christ's body was still mouldering in the grave, He suggested to them that it was risen, and so created the historic error which Modernism repudiates.

Finally, we are left with the old difficulty. What became of the body of Jesus? We are told that no doubt somehow it was lost. Is it then so easy for a human body to get lost at any time? How it could get lost in the tempest of love and hate of the Jerusalem of that day, it passes the wit of man to determine. Was there no Antigone among all these women to stand by and remember the place of the body of the Lord? Is it likely that Mary was less loyal to her Son than the Greek maiden to her brother? Was there no Sadducee or Pharisee with sufficient foresight and vigilance to destroy the early faith at its birth by producing the body? Is that like what we know of Caiaphas?

We are told by not a few Modernists that their real difficulty with miracle is not any *a priori* obstacle, but the want of evidence. Surely that is not the case here, at least. The impression which the whole handling of the Resurrection story irresistibly brings home is that here, at least, the *a priori* difficulty is the all-determining inhibition.

I am far from thinking that it is not a legitimate factor in weighing up the sober history of the whole matter. But I submit that that difficulty of believing in the unprecedented should have been taken earlier. It is part of the faith of Modernist Christianity that Jesus is absolutely unprecedented.

The personality of Jesus destroys the *a priori* improbability. In the end it seems to me that the reasoning which demands that we shall reduce the resurrection faith to hallucinations of overstrained men and women, and the resurrection fact to an absolutely ordinary resolution of the body of Jesus to its physical elements, demands the reduction of the uniqueness of Jesus also. Clearly in the background, behind all these confused theories of the resurrection, there is something much more powerful than want of historical evidence at work.

There can surely be little doubt that, if one can believe in the fact of the Resurrection and the empty grave, it makes far better history of the whole story than any form of the vision theory. It makes sense and unity of all the events, it makes the disciples intelligible as human beings all through, instead of resolving them into psychical riddles; above all, it makes a unity of the figure of Jesus Christ and sense of the New Testament. Finally, as I hope to show later, it gives us a profound and illuminating revelation of the innermost nature of the Universe, instead of making the riddle of the painful earth still more difficult, as it unquestionably does, if the earthly story of Jesus ends with the Cross rather than with the Resurrection.⁶

For all these reasons the Modernist view seems to me even less tenable than the Traditional.

I hope to show later, in more detail than is possible at this stage of our argument, how seamed

⁶ This is powerfully brought out in *The Mind of the Disciples* and *The Rising Tide of Faith*, by the Bishop of Pretoria.

with inner contradictions is the whole speculative position of Modernism; but enough has meanwhile been said, I trust, of the difficulties of both views to justify us in endeavouring to open some new path.

In seeking to discover this, it is necessary to go back to the Bible itself, and see if its teaching is rightly translated by either Traditionalist or Modernist.

I hope to be able to show that the idea of the miracles of Jesus which both hold in common, *i.e.* that they are primarily evidential portents, seals attached to the Divine message to authenticate it, is mistaken, and that they are instead part of the message itself; and that instead of this adding to their difficulty, it greatly lightens it, and enhances our whole conception of the worth of the Christian revelation. But the starting-point of the whole argument of this book is that it claims to present the Scriptural view. When all is said, the Gospels have a clear and coherent account of our Lord's teaching as regards the nature of His signs, which is neither that of Traditionalism nor Modernism. The next section of the book is thus an exegetical study. The closing section will endeavour to set this conclusion in the general context of modern thought and doctrine.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

It is necessary at this point to define clearly the limits of this essay. It is not an endeavour to deal with the whole subject of the miracles recorded in the Bible. Much confusion has, I believe, resulted from the endeavour to frame a theory of the miraculous which might be sufficiently wide to include all the miracles of the Bible. Having inductively framed such a conception, the apologist comes with it to the Gospel narratives and imposes it upon them, taking them as instances of that which he has already defined. The result has been that not a few of the essential characteristics of the "mighty works" of Jesus have been obscured by this unfortunate method.

The method pursued in this essay is quite different. We shall begin with the Gospel narratives themselves. This course, I trust, will justify itself for two reasons. First of all, there is no comparison between the Old Testament miracles and the New in their vital importance for living faith to-day. It is of little moment for faith whether Elijah actually called down fire from heaven upon the sacrifice at Carmel, whereas it is of the utmost moment whether Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

Secondly, I hope to show that the great majority of the Gospel miracles are associated with the teaching of Jesus about faith in a way which has no parallel in the records of most of the Old Testament miracles. They are also far more closely interwoven with the whole fabric of New Testament thought.

These reasons alone are sufficient to justify this limitation of scope, and to warrant us for the time at least in allowing the New Testament narratives to make their own impression upon us. The same reasons warrant us in setting aside from this part of our inquiry the whole traditional theory of miracle, whose rise and progress has already been noted. We shall try to start afresh from a return to the Synoptic Gospels, which speak simply of the signs, the works, and the wonders of Jesus. What we are concerned with is not whether Jesus wrought "miracles" in the sense in which Bishop Butler or Emerson, or apologists generally, have used the word, but whether He healed the sick, stilled the storm, and rose from the dead.

So much then being premised, we shall now endeavour to set forth the view of miracle contained in the Synoptic Gospels themselves.¹

Now when we enter on this inquiry, we find that we cannot reach the heart of the matter without the Old Testament. But we do not use it as our fathers used it or as did those apologists who

¹ I am indebted in this review of the teaching of Jesus to my friend Prof. A. G. Hogg's *Message of the Kingdom*, which has confirmed and developed my own reading of the Gospels.

endeavoured to compress the miracles of Jesus into one mould with those of the Old Testament. We use it in order to understand the world of thought in which Jesus and His disciples lived and acted. "The Old Testament," said Ritschl in a pregnant sentence, "is the lexicon of the New." We need to know the Hebrew inheritance of thought alike in its earlier and in its Jewish developments, if we are really to understand the thoughts and words and deeds of Jesus. For it is quite clear that in the first instance He spoke to His own contemporaries, and that we can therefore only understand His real meaning if we first make ourselves familiar with those general conceptions of God and His ways with men which were part of the common good of the Jewish people, and which Jesus shared with them. This principle is now universally recognised among all scholars. Whenever we come therefore on any mysterious or half-understood idea of Jesus, we have to consult the lexicon of the Old Testament in its Jewish edition. We apply that principle without hesitation when we are examining the New Testament ideas of sacrifice, of law, of judgment, and so forth. For our present purpose then we must ask what were the Old Testament presuppositions which governed the thoughts of the Apostles as they noted and pondered over the great deeds of their Master. Unless we do this, we shall come to these deeds with our modern presuppositions only, and the inevitable result will be that we shall miss their true meaning.

The Old Testament ideas which are relevant

and essential here for the true understanding of the Gospel narratives of the great deeds of Jesus are four in number : (1) the ideas of the Divine Covenant and its human correlative Faith as the supreme virtue of the true Israelite ; (2) of the Moral Order of the world ; (3) of the Spirit of God ; and (4) of the Kingdom of God.

I. THE COVENANT AND FAITH

The fundamental and inclusive idea of the religion of ancient Israel was that it was in Covenant with God. We have of late become again familiar with the word, which had almost become obsolete as applied to moral and religious questions, by the solemn institution of the Covenant of the League of Nations.² That Covenant, however, is a compact between nations. It is a bi-lateral Covenant in which the parties are on more or less equal terms. They undertake with each other to observe certain rules, and the arrangement is entered into for the common advantage. There is no " grace " in it. It was quite otherwise with Israel's Covenant. There could be no such equality between the High and Holy One and His destined people.

Such a Covenant can only begin by an act of pure and sovereign grace on His side. He must take the initiative and He must maintain it throughout His whole relation with His people. That He

² I take it that we have here the Old Testament conception, mediated through Calvin, mediated again through the Presbyterian, Woodrow Wilson, to whom we owe the main inspiration of the League.

has done this transcendent thing, and that He remains faithful and constant to His grace is the sustaining conviction of Hebrew religion. It underlies the whole piety, law, and sacrifice of the people, as it underlies their whole historic life and achievement. By His pure sovereign grace, God has called their forefathers, welded their tribes into a people, given them a law and a land, and promised to be to them all that God can be, in the way of loving them, caring for them, and training them. In the strength of that initiating saving act of God they undertake to be to Him a true and faithful people. Such is the Covenant, and the Covenant relationship within which the whole religious life of Israel moves.

In the nature of the case such a Covenant could only be instituted by a historic act of God, and it was to the Covenant given at Sinai that Israel looked back as the foundation of its life as a chosen and covenanted nation. But its histories carried back the idea to the earlier stages of its life, and the priestly writer in particular thinks of that preparatory period as of a succession of covenants, with Noah and the "world's grey fathers," with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. But it was above all to the deliverance from Egypt and the Covenant made through Moses at Sinai, that the piety of Israel looked as revealing the covenant grace of God.

Now again in the very nature of the case, this whole conception of the Covenant determined Israel's highest conceptions of the soul of true religion.

What did God ask of His people? What were the human obligations involved in this transcendent grace? We get various levels of insight here in the consciousness of Israel. In general the prevailing idea is that Israel's obligations are summed up in the words "obedience" and "righteousness." The Covenant at Sinai was not with the individual but with the nation, and the ordinary Hebrew, when he thought of "righteousness," thought of it as "a right attitude towards the existing constitution and conduct in harmony with its traditions."³ The "righteous man" is one who "occupies the right moral and religious standpoint, and carefully abstains from wickedly transgressing the great ordinance of human and Divine justice."⁴

We find this stage of piety reflected in those Psalms in which the writer appeals to his "righteousness" as the ground of his appeal to God. But the discipline of Israel's history drove its moral thought deeper. The conscience became more deeply awakened by the presence of calamity, and the finer mind of Israel came to put its whole confidence more and more in the pure grace of God. Along with this there went an ever-deepening emphasis on the necessity of faith as the supreme virtue. The one follows inevitably from the other. If salvation is only from the pure grace of God, then it can only realise itself through deepening and widening faith, faith in the God who initiates and maintains the Covenant, mani-

³ Davidson, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 274.

⁴ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. ii. p. 23.

festing Himself in it, and in the history of those who trust Him wholly within that Covenant. "Here lies the essence of man's being right with God, his response by faith to His grace in accepting the Covenant, and the continued exhibition of this condition of mind in the man's life and conduct. The righteous acts for which he is found righteous are only the exhibition of his attitude towards God and His covenant of Grace. To be righteous is to be right, *i.e.* to be found taking towards God's Covenant, which is a thing having as its principle grace, the right attitude; and this attitude is faith." ⁵

Schultz is equally emphatic as to this fundamental position of faith in Hebrew piety.⁶ The Divine life communicated by grace can be received by faith alone. Hence in the Old Testament as in the New, faith is the subjective condition of salvation.

"To surrender himself wholly and unreservedly to the Redeemer of Israel as his God, to accept the salvation embodied in the Covenant as his salvation, to acknowledge and love the ordinances of life as revealed in it as the ordinances of redemption . . . all this is what makes a true Israelite. Without this faith there is no morality, since faith in this God, as the only God of Salvation, is the first commandment." "As faith is the cause of salvation, so unbelief is the cause of all Israel's misery. It allows his conviction to be determined by what is material, by the power of the world, external

⁵ Davidson's *Old Testament Theology*, p. 279.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 31, vol. ii.

misfortune and a sense of his own strength; it is faint-hearted doubt as to the power of God, or haughty defiance of his will.”⁷ It has sometimes been said that there is comparatively little use of the word “faith” in the Old Testament. As compared with its constant repetition in the New Testament, that is true. But the idea itself under different names and grammatical forms is very frequently referred to. If we take it with its synonyms, “belief” and “trust,” we shall find the call for faith pervading all the deeper experience and thought of the Psalmists and Prophets, and present, moreover, as the mainstay of all heroic character and life in the Old Covenant. Therefore never was there a truer account of the religion of Israel given than that in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer had learned in the school of Jesus to understand the very soul of the religion of his people. The whole thought of the Old Testament turns round these two poles, the grace of God and the response of faith and fidelity on the part of man. Perfect goodness according to Old Testament religion, and this is true of the Jewish version also, is equivalent to perfect faith.

II. THE MORAL ORDER OF THE WORLD

The second great principle of Old Testament religion which we must grasp if we are to understand the works of Jesus, is that there is a Moral Order of the world.

The supreme achievement of the Hebrew race

⁷ Schultz, vol. i. p. 36.

in human history was its identification of the supreme Power over all things, in which all religions have believed, with the Power which manifested itself in the moral ideal. The genius of Israel finds its highest expression in the great saying of Jeremiah, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his strength, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (ix. 23-24).

The Old Testament history and literature is the record of that supreme discovery of the ultimate nature of the Universe. It led inevitably to the most sweeping Monotheism, for there can only be one Highest, and in the very nature of the case the morally ideal One must be intolerant of gods or godlings on a lower ethical plane.

But the moment Monotheism came to its own, the problem of evil raised its formidable head. There is no problem of evil for animists or polytheists. There is no need for a devil, it has been caustically said, in the pagan religions, seeing that his functions were always efficiently discharged by one or other of the pantheon. But the moment the Hebrew came to believe in One Holy Righteous and Gracious God, he had the problem before him. How was he to explain the tragic elements in human life, disease, calamity, sorrow, labour, premature death? The first and fundamental idea of the Hebrew apologetic was that all the tragic

elements in human life were due to the sin of man. At first this was applied with naïve simplicity of faith to the individual as well as to the national life. Whenever disaster befell any one, the conclusion was drawn that in some way that man had broken the law of Jehovah, and was suffering for his sins. But the facts of life were too strong for the theory, and so there arose for the Hebrews that specific form of the riddle of the world on which they spent so intense and prolonged a labour of thought, the problem of the sufferings of the righteous. Out of that turmoil of faith seeking to hold fast its supreme treasure, its master intuition of the moral perfection of its God, arose that great book which is the chief imaginative glory of Hebrew literature, the Book of Job. It was impossible after that to maintain the all too narrow theory of the earlier time. But Job gives no solution other than the appeal to the greatness of God's ways and the glory of the earth and heavens, and the assurance of faith that there must be an answer to the riddle. The Second Isaiah brings the solution a stage further with his marvellous intuition of the Suffering Servant and the vicarious character of the sufferings of the righteous. Finally, the assurance of the future life, in which all riddles are solved, comes glimmering up upon the horizon. But what we have in all this development of thought and emergence of new ideas of the first spiritual magnitude is not the abandonment of the original idea that the tragedies of human life are the result of human sin, but its expansion.

This is the central thought of the Hebrew

apologia, remaining constant through all the different stages through which it passes. Disease, premature death, poverty, famine, pestilence, national defeat, disaster, captivity, all the ills to which flesh is heir are constantly described in the Old Testament as due to man's folly and sin. The Hebrew never accepts them as part of the unchangeable nature of things. He is persuaded that they have no permanent place in God's world, and that they ought not to be, and would not be if only men with all their hearts turned to God. What is of capital importance for our present inquiry, they have no place in the coming Messianic order.

This fundamental idea is held with astonishing tenacity through the entire course of Hebrew literature. Its roots, of course, lie deep in the central thing in his religion, his idea of God, as perfectly ethical and as Almighty. Holding this faith he could not do other than interpret history as manifesting God. He must find God's character disclosed in what he believed to be God's providence.

Now, whatever we may think of this interpretation of life, it obviously conserved certain truths of the utmost importance. It enabled Israel to maintain an unquenchable vitality and courage throughout the tremendous discipline of its history, because it enabled it to hold fast the faith that God was really on the side of life and progress.

Here is the profound contrast between Indian and Hebrew thought, the pessimism of the one and the fundamental optimism of the other. The moment we come to believe that the evils of life

are irremovable except by the escape from life, we doom ourselves either to stoical resignation or to ascetic mysticism. But if we believe that these evils are removable by the escape from sin, we enter, as did the Hebrews, on a long and ascending pathway of progress and hope, impelled by the faith that the nature of things is on our side.

We do not owe this idea to the story of the Fall. Rather do we owe the story of the Fall to the hold which the Hebrew idea had on the mind and soul of the nation. It is the mythical embodiment of a fundamental faith. Rightly understood, in fact, the main intention of the Fall story is not so much to show how sin entered the world, as to show how labour, weariness, pain, and death found a lodgment in God's world. It expresses the radical Hebrew faith that these tragic shadows are not part of the enduring substance of things as God ordained them. They are alien elements which have entered from without by the unbelief and weakness of man. The tempter wins a lodgment by inspiring mistrust in God. We have here surely the obverse of the Old Testament valuation of faith as the supreme virtue, and the very tragedy of the story is the product of that fundamental optimism of the Hebrew faith which lies at the heart of all true Theism.

III. THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The third Old Testament idea which underlies the Gospel story is that of the Spirit of God. We must, of course, dispel from our minds the thought of any real anticipation, at this early stage of

revelation, of the Holy Spirit as a personality. The Old Testament conception is that of a Divine Potency, God in creative action in nature and in human life. The Hebrews had a much broader idea of the range of the action of the Spirit of God than is the case in our current religion. We think of the action of the Divine Spirit as confined strictly to the moral and spiritual life, but they thought of the Spirit as working along the whole range of human activities, bodily, mental, and spiritual. In general the action of the Spirit is thought of as theocratic. All special gifts that pertain to the furtherance of Israel's highest life, the genius of Aholiab and Bezaleel, who designed the Tabernacle, of the heroes and judges whom God raised up to preserve the independence of Israel, of the rulers who governed it and the prophets who purified its religion, are ascribed to the vitalising powers of the Spirit. But it is a natural extension of this principle to find the action of the Spirit everywhere in the world, for the world exists for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In his striking book on *The Spirit in the New Testament*, Professor Scott points out that the idea of the Spirit as operative in the natural world finds its chief expression in the opening chapter of Genesis, where the Spirit of God is depicted as brooding on the face of the waters of primeval chaos, and calling into being the ordered ranks of being, and finally the ascending grades of life, vegetative, animal, and human.⁸

⁸ Cf. Bergson's *Élan vital*. Is there any racial inheritance traceable here?

In particular is this the case with the wonders of life. Man's whole life is thought of as sustained by the Spirit of God, which animates and sustains in being his physical organism. The author of the Book of Job declares, "If He gather unto Himself His spirit, all flesh shall perish together" (Job xxxiv. 14, 15). We have here the same idea as is expressed in Genesis vi. 3: "My spirit shall not always strive with man forever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be an hundred and twenty years." Taken in its context the passage obviously means that human life only exists by the indwelling of the Spirit within the human frame, what we would to-day call the anabolic force of life prevailing over the katabolic forces of decay.

In the 104th Psalm the Spirit appears as the vivifying influence in all creatures. "These wait all upon Thee . . . Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to the dust. Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. civ. 27, 29, 30). The idea sometimes is that all forms of life are derived from the spirit. "They have all one spirit, and man hath no pre-eminence over the beasts." Elsewhere it is man alone to whom life is communicated by the Spirit. "My life is yet within me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils" (Job xxvii. 3). "But there is a spirit in man. The breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). "The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life" (Job xxxiii. 4). Life as it exists in man would seem to be regarded as some-

thing of higher nature which has entered for a time into an earthly being. At death it returns to its Divine source, "to God who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7; cf. Job xxxiv. 14).⁹

IV

The fourth Old Testament idea in the background of the thought of the Gospels is that of the Messianic Kingdom. In this Hebrew "Utopia," as it has been called, we find all the three thoughts of the Divine grace, of the moral order of the world, and of the Spirit presupposed and blended, fused together by that passionate vitality of faith and hope which is the very finest spirit of Israel. Its roots lie deep in the people's faith in the abiding Covenant grace of God. It was impossible for the true Israel to believe in the defeat of the purpose of its God, or to be content with the condition into which its own sins had brought it. Indian thought, face to face with the eternal riddle of the world, taught escape from the whole tremendous coil of evil for the individual by the way of Thought, as in the Vedanta; Stoicism, in the wide and dreary prison of the world, also sought deliverance for the individual by teaching indifference to fortune. But by virtue of its faith in the Covenant Israel sought its deliverance by other roads. Its Theistic faith compelled it to trace its own tragic fortunes not to any necessity in the scheme of the world, but to its own misuse of its freedom. The roots of its tragedy

* E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, pp. 38, 39.

were not in God's world but in itself. They were therefore removable. There is a fundamental and far-reaching difference here. The view of things which denies sin is really, paradoxical as it may seem, far less hopeful than that which frankly admits the verdict of conscience. If man is the determinate victim of the world, then there is no hope for him save in submission. If he has departed from the true order of the world, or has not yet reached it, the whole outlook is incomparably more hopeful: the tragedy is in principle removable, there is hope in God.

So in the Theism of Israel this hope found expression in the idea of the Messianic Kingdom. This hope, which gleams intermittently through the prophetic writings and in the prophetic histories, finds very varied forms of expression which need not be dwelt on at this point in any detail. But in every form the deliverance is conceived of as coming from the grace of God. In Jeremiah it takes form in the great idea of a new Covenant, less outward and legal, more comprehensive and inward, wrought in the hearts of men by the power of God. The coming deliverance is primarily thought of as a reconciliation and reunion of the nation with God. In Isaiah, Israel, set free from its foes to worship its God, is thought of as in the foreground with the assenting nations of the world around it. But the outward curse is broken also. Sorrow, disease, and death disappear with sin in the highest forms of the Messianic hope. The life of heaven, in a word, comes to earth. This deliverance is always thought of as coming from the grace of

God, but the way can be prepared for it by repentance, obedience, and faith.

In many of the relevant passages the deliverance is thought of as coming by a personal Deliverer, the Messiah or Anointed of the Lord. He is conceived of as richly endowed with the life-giving Divine Spirit, and through His mediation that Spirit is poured out on men.

Here we have already, as it were, projected on the screen of the future the outlines of the Figure whom we see in the Gospels.

We have been describing the four Hebrew pre-suppositions, but our inquiry would be incomplete if we did not ask the further question, What changes happened to this picture in the Jewish version of Hebrew religion? Changes there were, but they do not seem to me to affect in any material way the broad outlines of the picture which has been sketched. The piety of the Old Covenant remains, but becomes more legal under the influence of Scribe and Pharisee. Yet faith in the Covenant God of Israel remains as the essential root of the Jewish piety. However burdened that faith may be, it persists, and great emphasis is laid, for example, upon its power to hasten the coming of the Messianic Age, a point of great importance, as we shall see presently when we come to the study of the Gospels.

The old and deeply rooted belief in the association of sin with tragedy remains and is deepened. Every true Jew believed in the judgments of God, and in the deep association of sin and premature death, death being the reflex of sin. The hope in

the immortality and blessedness of the righteous, which was so prominent in the Jewish period, grows. Finally, the idea of the Messianic reign is emphasised, and, as in the earlier Scriptures, is always conceived of not only as the reign of holiness and righteousness, and the saints who embody these virtues, but as a time when the curses of death and disease are abolished, when the alien yoke of the heathen is broken, and the whole dark kingdom of evil, with the sway of the devil and his angels, is finally overthrown.

This Jewish version of the Hebrew solution of the riddle of the world is the background of all the life and thought of the Gospels, and it is in this setting only that the narratives of our Lord's great deeds and their place in His whole revelation can really be understood.

We are not concerned here with the truth of that view, or how far it is believable by modern men. That question will arise at a later stage. At present we are concerned simply with the question of what that view in its completeness really is. Our inquiry is historical and exegetical, and is the necessary preliminary to these later stages. It may be that the view which will finally emerge from our historical discussion is more believable and has more significance for our faith and life than either of the two theories which have been examined in an earlier chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE GOSPEL MIRACLES

WE are now in a better position to understand the view of the signs of Jesus which is uniformly held by the Synoptic Evangelists. In this volume I have confined myself in the main to the Synoptic Gospels for exegetical proof of the positions advanced. There are in the Fourth Gospel traces of the purely evidential view, but these, it seems to me, have been gravely exaggerated. The broad general view is practically the same as that in the Synoptics, and in certain points is even more strongly stated. But discussion of the Fourth Gospel can only be carried out in view of its place at the end of the Apostolic age and the development of Apostolic thought. That the Synoptic Gospels have a perfectly clear and consistent view of their own, and that that view is different from both the Traditional and the Modernist views, I hope to make clear in this part of our argument. I do not suppose that almost any competent scholar will so far to-day question the main drift of what has been said above. Now for our further purpose it is not necessary at this point to go into the critical question of the sources of the Synoptic Gospels. It could, I believe, be easily shown that the view in question is that taken in all the sources, in Q, in the

primitive Mark document, and in the additional matter used in the First and Third Gospels alike.

For clearness I propose to take the Gospel according to S. Matthew, as it is here that the general view comes most impressively to light.

What is that general view? It is that in Jesus Christ the Kingdom has already come actually and potentially, that the "signs" are manifestations of the Kingdom, and that they are wrought by the Spirit of God through the ideal faith of the Founder and in response to the faith of those who, through Him, enter into the Kingdom. As such they are anticipations and proleptic manifestations of the Kingdom in its perfection when the reign of sin and death shall have been finally broken. The author of the First Gospel, instead of the term, the Kingdom of God, uses the term, the Kingdom of Heaven. The "signs" of the Kingdom of Heaven are manifestations of the heavenly life, fragments of heaven in the life of time.

The first point to notice here is the extraordinary emphasis put by Christ everywhere in the Synoptic narratives on the necessity of faith. This is the element in His teaching which is as it were blurred and half suppressed under both the Traditionalist and Modernist views. It is necessary to go into this with some detail, for its truly remarkable character seems to me to-day to be as a rule quite inadequately recognised, and to carry far-reaching consequences for Christian theology.

The First Gospel, then, after the introductory sections dealing with the ancestry and infancy of

Jesus, and carrying the narrative to Nazareth, tells of the appearing and mission of the Baptist, the descent of the Spirit, and the Temptation. Then comes the announcement of the coming of the Kingdom, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The call of the first two disciples follows, and the first missionary journey with its broadcast healings of disease—"healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people." Then comes the Sermon on the Mount, containing material, probably, that is drawn from several periods in our Lord's ministry. What we are concerned with mainly here, however, is S. Matthew's general presentation of the history, and it is noteworthy that he begins with the simple announcement of the coming advent of the Kingdom, and the record of its characteristic signs, the signs that people of that age and creed would naturally expect from a Deliverer from the sway of the evil one over the bodies and minds of men. Then comes the fuller unfolding of the kind of life which the Kingdom demands.

Then follow the eighth and ninth chapters, which are almost entirely taken up with the records of the healing of disease, the story of the leper (leprosy being for the Jew, on account of its malignity, much what cancer is to-day for the Western peoples), of the centurion's servant, of Peter's wife's mother, and of the scene in Capernaum, "at even when the sun did set," of the stilling of the storm, of the healing of the Gadarene demoniac, of another paralytic, of Jairus's daughter, of the woman with the issue of blood, of the two blind

men, and of a dumb demoniac. The section closes with another journey, like the first, of broadcast healing and of teaching. Not content with this, Jesus finally calls the complete circle of the twelve disciples, and gives them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness, transferring, as it were, His powers to His followers.

Now let us for a moment revert to the details of these stories. Nine of them are concerned with the healing of diseased persons. In the first the leper's faith in the power of Jesus to help him is emphasised. In the story of the centurion's servant the faith of the centurion is the real point of the story. Jesus marvels at it, and sees in it the promise of the ingathering of the Gentiles into the Kingdom. He then cures the servant, explicitly associating that cure with the centurion's faith. Nothing is said of faith in the next narrative, the healing of Peter's wife's mother, but it is presupposed, as the appeal for aid comes from the household of His leading disciple. Then comes the stilling of the storm on the lake and the rebuke of the disciples for their alarm, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" There was no reason for alarm, they would neither sink nor drown.

In the case of the Gadarene demoniac, nothing is said of faith. Indeed, in all such cases of possession, faith is impossible on the part of the patient, and is never required of him. Again, in the next story, the healing of the palsied man, the motive is the same as elsewhere. "Jesus, seeing their faith," announces the man's forgiveness, and having given

the greater gift, proceeds to give the less, and heals him.

Then comes the very remarkable double story of the raising from the dead of the ruler's daughter, and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood. In both cases, in the faith of Jairus and in the faith of the woman, the principle is emphasised, and in the second, Christ says in so many words to the woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Next comes the healing of the two blind men. Here we are told that Christ asked of them if they had faith, and that in bestowing sight He said to them, "According to your faith, be it unto you."

The last of the "signs" in these chapters is the healing of another demoniac which comes under the rule referred to above.

Now the meaning of this whole section is surely perfectly clear. Yet, if it had been rightly considered, the Traditional theory of miracle, which, as we have seen, regards the miracles of Jesus as evidential portents of mere Divine power, could hardly have come into being. Such portents elsewhere are explicitly refused by Jesus. They correspond to the "signs" for which the Jews asked, and of which He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it save the sign of Jonas the prophet."

The "signs" of these two chapters are something much more than portents, they are revelations of the presence of the Kingdom of God, not, as has been said, seals attached to the document, but parts of the document itself. To those who saw and understood them, they were revelations of

the ideal will of God for man, and of man's ideal destiny, assurances, also, that God was with Jesus to make that ideal a reality even here in the world of time.

Of capital importance, also, is the continual emphasis given by Christ to faith as the condition of these "signs." There is no evading the clear testimony of the Synoptic Gospels as to this point in the great majority of the miracles of healing. Yet on the Traditional theory it is impossible to account for this. On that theory, which emphasises Divine Power as the essential evidential point, all such human co-operation in the "signs" detracts from the Divine wonder. The inability of Jesus to work any mighty works in Nazareth for instance does not harmonise at all with the view on which the signs are signs above all of the unconditional Divine power of the Son of God.

Hence the prevalence of the 'Traditional view has had unhappy effects in blinding many interpreters of the Gospels to the remarkable and far-reaching character of our Lord's teaching about the creative power of faith. But on the view of the signs of Christ supported in these pages, it is easy to see why just this emphasis should be laid on man's co-operation with God, or rather man's receptiveness to God. The Old Testament view of faith being what it was, this is precisely what we should expect.

We have here, in fact, a development of the view which we find in the Old Testament throughout. The announcement of the Kingdom corresponds to the founding of the Covenant. It is the new

and final advance of God's grace to men, a great deepening and widening of the old relation, initiated by God with the old Israel. But as in that Old Covenant, all its blessings are mediated through faith. Faith is the root virtue of both, and that is why throughout the whole teaching of Jesus there is an incessant call above all other things for faith, with the continually repeated assurance that there is nothing in the way of goodness that faith cannot attain, and nothing in the way of blessing in breaking the mortal powers of evil that it cannot achieve. The essential point to notice here is that, according to these Gospels and their presentation of the teaching of Jesus, both the realm within the soul and the realm without, both the sin within man and the tragic element in human life, are regarded as alike spheres for conquest by the victorious energy of faith. Modern theological thought has held to the first, but hesitates as to the second, or even denies the power of faith over the physical world at all. The far-reaching importance of this will become obvious as we proceed with our discussion. We return now from this digression to our examination of the narrative in the Gospel of S. Matthew.

Having made this point as to faith and its inseparable and vital connection with the great deeds of Jesus, the Evangelist does not deem it necessary at every stage in the rest of the narratives of the signs to make it explicit. It is not necessary to do so in these highly condensed narratives. But none the less the idea runs through the whole story, and comes again and again to the surface.

The section of the Gospel which follows that containing the Sermon on the Mount and the two great chapters recounting the mighty deeds of Jesus, opens with the calling of the twelve and a discourse to them : then follows the message from the Baptist asking them for assurance as to His Divine mission. "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" In effect this was an appeal for some sign that the Kingdom of God had really come.

Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter at once. He does not, as He might well have done, send John a personal assurance of the sympathy and admiration for him that He unquestionably felt, and expressed to His own disciples immediately after. That would have been but superficial comfort for the great spirit of the Baptist. He gives eloquent proof of His appreciation of the greatness of John by His deeds. "In that hour," we are told, in the parallel passage in S. Luke, Jesus "cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind He bestowed sight." And He answered and said unto them, "Go your way and tell John what things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me" (Matt. xi. 4-6). It may seem to a superficial reader as if we had here simply the portent theory of miracle back again. But that is not so. Not even for John would He have given a useless

astronomical sign to prove the truth of His teaching. He does better than give him convincing external evidence of the truth of His teaching about the Kingdom. He actually shows him the Kingdom as present in the healed bodies and renewed spirits of men.

The "things which they see" are obviously the acts of healing, with a reference back to the two preceding chapters of such signs; "the things which they hear" are the verbal teaching as to God, man, and the Gospel of the Kingdom, with a reference back to the Sermon on the Mount.

In the fourteenth chapter of S. Matthew we have the teaching as to faith still further illustrated in the story of Christ walking upon the water. When He comes to the disciples across the sea, Peter desires to come to Him out of the boat. And when he turns his gaze away from Jesus, and realises the fury of the storm, he begins to sink. Whereupon Jesus says to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The implication is clear. Had he had faith like his Master, he would have been in no danger from the mortal powers of nature.

The next story of healing is that of the Syro-phœnician woman. Surely the whole point of this story is that when Christ finds that vital thing, faith, even in a woman outside the historic Covenant, He grants to her the hidden wealth of the Kingdom even as to His own countrymen. We have here the germ of the whole Pauline universalism. "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour."

This follows the story of the feeding of the five thousand, and then for the second time Jesus refuses to work a mere marvel and disposes beforehand of the type of miracle beloved by eighteenth-century apologists and mediæval legend mongers, with the austere words, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign."

The next healing is that of the epileptic boy. Here Jesus is reported as filled with sorrow and condemnation that such misery should not have been removed already. "O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you! Bring him hither to Me!"

Then follows a pregnant paragraph which, even had it stood alone, would have been absolutely conclusive as to the main point which I am seeking to establish. The disciples, after their failure to heal the demoniac, come to Him and raise the central issue, "Why could not we cast it out?" The answer is equally direct. Jesus does not say, "Because of God's immutable decree." He says, "Because of your little faith, for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place: and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

This is one of the few places where the briefer narrative of S. Mark is even fuller than that of the other two on the question at issue. According to this narrative the father says to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus saith unto him, If thou canst. Believe! All things are possible to him that

believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe, help Thou my unbelief!" The heart of the tragedy being now laid bare, "the boy was cured from that hour."

It is surely now perfectly clear that there is one great principle running through all these sayings about faith, that the Synoptic Gospels regard the whole realm of sin within the heart and of tragedy from without which strike at and poison the life of man as not being part of the unchangeable order of God. They are intruders, and since Christ has come, they can be dispelled by faith. Take, for instance, the crucial case of disease. Jesus never seems to have hesitated in treating it as something alien to the Kingdom of Heaven, and to have struck at it whenever He found faith to be healed.

We cannot otherwise account for the narratives of what I have called broadcast healing, the waves of life giving energy that seemed to go out of Him among the multitudes of sick who gathered round Him. Indeed, He seems, as in Nazareth, at least to have wished to strike at it where the general unbelief prevented it. There is not one single instance recorded in which He refused the appeal of a sick man on the ground that it was God's will that he should continue to suffer. And unquestionably He approved of, indeed delighted in that will to be healed and faith to be healed, and gloried in the powers of healing that God had given Him. It is, of course, true that He put far more importance on the healing of the soul than on the healing of the body, and where

He found that the work of the latter prevented the practice of the former, or encroached on the time essential for the keeping open of the channel of communion with His Father, He retired from the practice of healing, or forbade the healed to spread the news of it, and to create unmanageable or intrusive crowds of wonder seekers. But to exaggerate this wholly intelligible action into a certain disparagement on His part of the healing gift is an absolute travesty of the plain meaning of the narratives. It is perfectly clear that He gloried in the work of healing the bodies as well as the souls of men, and that He regarded the overthrow of disease as an essential part of His mission and of His manifestation of the Kingdom. It may be said that all this is quite alien to our modern ways of thinking. Even if it were, we have no right when we are dealing historically with the documents to impose our modern ideas upon them. There is only one question that we have the right, as honest inquirers, to ask: What did this writer think and what did he mean to say? That is the first principle of all sound interpretation. In this case the thoughts and the meaning of the Evangelists, I submit, are plain.

But if this be admitted, the question may fairly be asked, Is this way of looking at, for example, disease in any material way different from the way of any good physician to-day? He is always out against disease on principle, and never hesitates when he is face to face with any malady, to strike at it by any means in his power. To him it is simply an evil to be attacked and destroyed by drugs, by

diet, by treatment of all kinds, by surgery, or by sanitation, in a word by the liberating in every way possible of the vital powers, the *vis medicatrix naturæ*. His assumption always is that disease is against sound nature, and therefore something which ought not to be. He never asks whether it might not be for his patient's spiritual good to remain physically diseased. Neither, so far as I can see, did Jesus. The only real difference is that the modern physician attacks it, or used to attack it (for a change has of late been obviously coming over the scene) from the side of the body only. The New Testament men, and above all Christ Himself, believed it could be attacked more powerfully from within, and put their hopes on reinforcing indefinitely the powers of the spirit. And the whole tendency in modern medicine, if a layman in medicine has read the position rightly, has been for the modern mind to make a tentative advance towards the older view. The whole development of psycho-therapeutics is significant. It is much too early in that movement as yet to lay down any hard and fast views as to the limits beyond which it may not go. Modern medical thought and practice is not a fixed, but a moving thing. Sober thought may yet revert to Luther's saying, that if we have faith enough to be healed, there is no disease from which we may not recover. The dictum of the *British Medical Journal*, that there is no tissue of the human body wholly removed from the influence of spirit, is at least a significant step in that direction. We may close our brief review of the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels on the vital part that faith plays

in the signs of Jesus by saying that it should be noted that Christ says that great faith enables great deeds to be done, that too scant a faith and still more its absence can check even His own activity of blessing, and that in one instance He even says, "According to your faith be it unto you." The strongest saying as to the power of faith to change the courses of things and overthrow all that stands in the way of the Kingdom of Heaven is repeated in these Gospels in different contexts and in slightly varying forms of expression. In S. Matthew, as we have seen, when the disciples ask the reason of their failure to cast out the evil spirit, He replies, "Because of your little faith," and continues, "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you." In Luke (xvii. 5), shrinking from the call to unlimited forgiveness, the disciples say, "Increase our faith"; and the Lord said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up and be thou planted in the sea : and it would have obeyed you." It is true that, as the alarmed commentators laboriously point out, we have here vivid Oriental metaphor. But the metaphor *means* something for all that. Just how much it means, the record of the signs, the victories over disease and death, the feeding of the multitudes, and the control of the storm and the waters give abundant proof. When we are at the task of interpreting what Matthew or Luke really believed that Jesus meant,

we have to remember what the same writers report Him to have done.

We pass on now to the further question as to whether the Evangelists mean us to look upon this same principle of faith as enabling Christ to work His own "signs," or whether we are to think of them as signs rather of some inherent and unconditional Divine energy, or simply apart from His faith altogether, as sovereign acts of God, who uses Him as instrument of His creative power and love and wisdom.

In pursuance of this inquiry, then, we have now to consider the question of our Lord's teaching about prayer as we find it set before us in the Synoptic Gospels, and in particular His view of the power of the right kind of petitionary prayer.

In nothing is the contrast between the New Testament and the prevailing theory and practice of our own day more sharply in contrast than as to the power of petitionary prayer. We shall consider in another context the reasons for this, which are deeply rooted in much of the thought of our time. The pressure on the religious, and in particular the Christian thought of our time, of the idea of an unalterable course of nature, has been so great as to make this teaching of Jesus almost mute, to suppress its meaning so as to make us even unconscious of its force. In an impressive passage of his book on *The Kingdom and the Messiah*, Professor E. F. Scott shows that Jesus believed that the coming and victory of the Kingdom could be accelerated by the believing and importunate prayers of the faithful, and says, "By His welcome

of importunacy in prayer, Jesus implied that God Himself accepted it and would refuse nothing to an insistent faith. This aspect of the thought of Jesus can be seen even more clearly in His explicit sayings about the power of prayer. Prayer, as He conceives it, is much more than a waiting on God, in passive self-surrender to an inevitable will. The prayer of faith will assure its own fulfilment. 'Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.' The will of God is not wholly fixed and unalterable. It is the will of our Father, who is aware of our needs and longings, and who desires that we should plead with Him and prevail. By granting us access to Himself in prayer, He has given us control over the mightiest of all powers. We have the right to use this power, and to win for ourselves the interposition of God even when He seems most unwilling. Jesus Himself was strong through prayer. He believed that by means of it He had the might of God to support Him; and He sought to impart His own assurance to His disciples."¹

It is unnecessary to give all the passages illustrating this conception of the power of prayer to influence and change the ordinary course both of nature and of the circumstances of human life. It will be sufficient to call attention to the remarkable catena of passages in the eleventh chapter of S. Luke. Let us consider the sequence here. Jesus, being asked for a method in prayer, gives His disciples "the Lord's Prayer," which includes not only prayer for inward and "spiritual" blessings,

¹ Cf. Appendix C.

but for the historic coming of the greatest of all events, the Kingdom of God, which, as we have seen, includes the outer as well as the inner blessings, the abolition of both sin within and tragedy without, and also for the plain obvious outward good of "daily bread."

Then comes the parable of the importunate friend, of which the point obviously is the persistence of the friend, the refusal to take a refusal.

Then comes the triad of imperatives. Ask, seek, knock. You are to ask, and if you do not get what you want by asking, you are to do everything you can to find out the causes of the rejection, and finally you are to beat at the closed door!

Then comes the sweeping statement of the principle, "Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Finally comes the saying that clinches the whole, compares God with man, and asks how if a human father can be trusted to satisfy plain human wants, we can distrust the willingness of the Almighty Father to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. In the parallel passage in S. Matthew, we have the reading "good things" instead of the Holy Spirit. The difference, however, is immaterial, for, according to the Synoptics, the Holy Spirit is the all-inclusive gift, including ideally the whole range of the "miraculous."

Now, if we let this remarkable group of passages with its crescendo of promises have its full force upon our minds, we get some estimate of His idea of the range and power of ideal human prayer. It is a window into His own inner life, into the kind

of faith which He had in God, and the expectations of His succour in which He lived. It is clear that this kind of prayer presupposes, and has as its animating spirit the kind of faith by which He wrought His own mighty works. If all this be true of ideal prayer, then we can understand how Jesus was able to heal the sick, and still the storm, and raise the dead. The teaching and the deeds fit one another like hand and glove.

He is obviously dealing with the same kind of force as He was thinking of when He said that if the disciples had faith as a grain of mustard seed they would move mountains. He is thinking of prayer electrically charged, as it were, with faith, of faith as expressing itself in believing prayer. Indeed He repeatedly and expressly associates the prayer which prevails with God with faith. It is not mere obstinate despairing importunity of which He is really thinking, the mechanical repetition of despairing petitions to an unwilling God. "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." According to His wont in teaching, He isolates and emphasises one aspect after another of the idea He is seeking to express. He speaks now of importunacy, and now of faith as the essential thing. But to get at His whole meaning we have to combine both the aspects in a whole, and therefore in ideal prayer we have to think of importunacy as starting from and as charged with faith, and of faith as persisting against apparent rebuff, as the Syrophenician woman did.

But this is not all. The prayer that prevails is a prayer charged with hope. "Believe that ye

have received the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them." We have to "expect great things from God" if we are to "attempt great things for God."

And, finally, prevailing prayer must be charged with love. "When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any." "Verily I say unto you, if two of you shall agree as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." The only thing that can make men really forgiving, and can completely unite their wills, is love.

If we let all these passages have their full and natural weight with us, it is surely impossible to evade the conclusion that He is letting us into the secret of His own "miracle"-working powers.

He does His mighty deeds by prayer, sustained and carried home by His unique faith, hope, and love. The roots of His unique power over nature lie therefore in His unique spiritual character, not in His metaphysical Divinity, but in His perfect humanity. All this seems irresistibly implied in His sayings about prayer. Have we over and above this any explicit assertion that His supernatural powers come through prayer? We have one such unambiguous saying in the Synoptic Gospels.

At the moment of His arrest He rebukes the violence of Peter, and tells him that there is no need for it, that if He wished He could at any moment deliver Himself. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He should presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" That this belief that our Lord's works

were wrought by prayer was the underlying view of the early community and the Apostolic circle is still further evidenced by the fact that the Fourth Gospel, which is the most explicit of them all on the inherent Divinity of our Lord, ascribes His greatest work, the raising of Lazarus, to the direct prayer of Christ to His Heavenly Father. What was believed to be true of this "sign" must clearly also have been true of all the rest.

The cumulative case seems to me irresistible. The Gospel theory of the "miracles" of Jesus is that they are the answers of God to the prayers of the Ideal Son, the Man who is the supreme instance, in history, of Faith, Hope, and Love; and they say with unambiguous plainness that that ideal Man invited His disciples to similar enterprises of faith, encouraging them to believe that in proportion to their faith would be the manifestation of God's order, the revelation of man's life as God meant it to be.

But we have not yet completed our survey of the thought of the Gospels. We have been looking at the signs of Jesus mainly from the human side, and so have dwelt upon the moral and spiritual conditions of their appearance. We have now to complete that survey by taking into account their origin in God, the supreme Creative Power by whom they were ultimately wrought. We have therefore, finally, to consider at this point the Synoptic and early Apostolic idea of the Holy Spirit.

We are concerned, first of all, with the idea of the Spirit of God as it appears in the Evangelists.

In Professor Scott's admirable volume on *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, he draws a distinction between our Lord's own view of the Spirit and that of the Evangelists, who, he thinks, read back into the Gospels the thoughts and experiences of the Apostolic age, when, as is universally admitted, the idea of the Spirit acquires a new prominence. This part of his argument does not seem to me at all convincing. Indeed, of the sayings of Jesus about the Holy Spirit he admits so much to be original, that it seems unnecessary to reject the rest. But in any case, what we are here concerned with is the view set forth in the Gospels themselves, and as to this there seems no ground for dispute.

In the period between the Testaments the idea of the Spirit had been in some eclipse. It was an age of the law and the scribe rather than of prophecy; and the interest of Jewish thought, so far as it was active on the subject of the continued action of God upon the world, had been absorbed by the fascinating Logos conception, and the alluring hope which it held out of harmonious union between the finest contemporary Greek thought and the wealth of spiritual genius and experience contained in the Hebrew tradition. We can understand this when we think of the eagerness with which progressive Christians looked in the last generation upon the theory of Evolution, and that with which younger thinkers are in our day turning to the idea of the Unconscious Mind.

But the faith that the Messiah would be richly endowed with the Spirit of God, and that through

Him that Spirit would be abundantly poured forth on all the faithful, persisted.² The source of this plenitude of Divine life, according to the Psalms of Solomon, is the Messiah's fear of God, a reverent trust in Him, from which comes all His confidence and hope (xvii. 34, 39).³ The life of the devout Jew was too deeply rooted in the Old Testament for the faith in the coming of the Divine Spirit to have been lost. These Scriptures, as we have seen, anticipated with the coming of the Messiah an outpouring of the Spirit of God, the Spirit which raised all man's higher activities to their noblest power, and which lived at the very springs even of man's physical life.

Into this situation came the apparition and the call of John the Baptist. We have now briefly to review the teaching of the Evangelists on the relation of the Holy Spirit to the signs of Jesus. We shall follow here for convenience the same method as in dealing with the prominence given by these writers to faith. There is no real divergence between the Evangelists in this matter any more than there is any real difference on the matter of faith. They all obviously take the same view. But just as S. Matthew lays peculiar emphasis

² "In the future must all the devout be bearers of the Spirit. . . . It will be the task of the Messiah to pour forth the Spirit on all believing ones" (Testt. Lev. xviii. 7; Jude xxiv. 2); cf. Sibylline Oracles, iii. 582; Bousset, *Religion des Judenthums im N.T. Zeitalter*, 2nd ed., p. 453.

³ Quoted by Volz, *Jüdische Eschatologie*: "The source of the Messiah's power is the fear of God. His confidence is in the Lord, therefore can no one do anything against Him. His trust is not in horse or rider . . . but the Lord is His hope" (p. 232).

on faith, S. Luke lays peculiar emphasis on the Spirit, both in his Gospel and in the Acts, and so we shall take his narrative as exhibiting with emphasis the general view. In the introductory sections of this Gospel we have first the promise of the coming of the Baptist as one "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." Then comes the story of the Annunciation and of the Virgin Birth by the power of the Spirit. The story of the mission of the Baptist follows. In his announcement of the coming of the Christ, he specifically describes His work as follows: "He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Then comes the Baptism of Jesus. "And it came to pass, when all the people were baptised, that Jesus also having been baptised, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit in answer to His prayer descended in a bodily form as a dove upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." This Baptism of the Spirit is obviously, as we shall see, the vital point in the whole narrative. It is probably the key to the story of the Temptation. Every Divine gift carries with it, as history shows, the possibility of the most tragic misuse, and that even the gift of the Divine Spirit carries with it temptations seems to be the point of the narrative. If that gift of the Spirit lay solely, as we sometimes suppose, in an exaltation of the moral and spiritual nature, it would be difficult to see how this could be the case; but if, as is our argument, it included control over the destroying and "evil" element in nature, and the power to

work "signs" of that control, it is quite otherwise. Having emerged from the Temptation, Jesus (Luke iv. 14) returned "in the power of the Spirit" into Galilee. In Galilee, He comes into the synagogue, and declares the nature of His mission to His fellow-citizens.

It is decisive that in order to do this, He selects from the Old Testament writings the passage from Isaiah lxi. 1, 2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Taken in the context of His teaching and deeds, this is a clear statement that He regards not only His preaching, but His mighty deeds as created and sustained by the Spirit of the Lord.

The basal and inclusive idea being thus explicitly stated at the outset, there is no need for emphasizing it in the particular narratives, any more than we saw to be the case when the Evangelists were speaking of faith as the condition of the "mighty works."

The next explicit reference to the Spirit is in x. 21, where we are told He "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit." The idea here is, clearly, that His ordinary experience is carried for the moment into an even higher zone of insight and gladness by the touch of the Spirit leading Him on to see new depths of the Divine.

The next is xi. 13, where S. Luke gives us a variant to S. Mark's rendering, "How much more shall your

Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ! ” S. Luke probably supplies Holy Spirit for S. Matthew’s “ good things,” as Dr Denney has suggested, simply because to him the Holy Spirit “ is regarded as the inclusive gift of the Kingdom, containing in principle all its blessings.”

A little later in the same chapter there is a curious variant on the other two Synoptics of an opposite kind. S. Matthew and S. Mark say, “ If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you.” S. Luke, instead of “ the Spirit of God,” reads “ the finger of God.” The variation is of little moment, for there is abundant evidence that S. Luke, by the “ finger of God,” meant essentially the same as he means elsewhere when he speaks of the Spirit. The important point for our present purpose is that all three passages alike treat the “ signs ” of casting out demons, as proof that the Kingdom of God is already present, and that they are not wrought by Jesus, as a “ second Jehovah,” acting as it were from His own inherent strength, but as the medium through which the living energy of God is able to work among men.

The next direct reference is in the twelfth chapter, where we have the passage about the unpardonable sin. According to the Lucan version of this saying, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is said to be worse than the sin involved in speaking against the Son of Man, and to carry him who commits it out of reach even of the forgiveness of God. We seem to have here already anticipated the Apostolic view of the gift of the Spirit, the

culminating step in the progress of redemption, the end for which the Son of Man came, and lived and died and rose again. The Holy Spirit is as it were God's last and highest word to men, the word which finally interprets the Son of Man, which speaks in conscience, in man's ideals, and at its loudest and clearest in the fullest Christian experience. To have known that experience and to have destroyed it, is to kill the sense of hearing of the soul. The gravity of the warning is the measure of the supreme value put upon the gift of the Spirit. This seems to be the meaning of this difficult passage, and it is very hard to think that we have not here Christ's own words, and that we have not in them something prior to the Epistles. Yet if so, we have here implied in negative form the essence of the whole apostolic doctrine of the Spirit. The passage is followed immediately by the promise of supernatural guidance by the Spirit in all moments of emergency and danger. Nothing more is said directly of the Spirit until the close of the Gospel, where the disciples are told to wait in Jerusalem the fulfilment of the "promise of the Father," which is explained as the being "endued with power from on high."

We have here in this sequence of references, it may be granted, much less than is said in S. Matthew of the power of faith. But surely what is said is quite decisive.

The Baptism, with the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, is, in the light of the passages which have been cited, meant to give the key to the whole story, the Divine explanation of the marvellous personality and

deeds of Jesus. It takes in the Gospel of S. Luke the same place as is taken in the Acts by the narrative of Pentecost. It is as if the writer in the one case said this is what a man filled by the Spirit can do, and in the other this is what a Church baptised by the Spirit can do.

The Baptism is, further, the ultimate explanation of all the "signs" of Jesus. These are characteristic and creative works of the Spirit, the Spirit to which the later and greater Hebrew literature ascribed the origin and maintenance of life, the works of consecrated genius, and the highest ranges of insight, foresight, and the vision of God. It was fitting that that Spirit should be manifested in the healing of the blind, the opening of the deaf ears, the setting free of the paralysed, the insane, and the leper, and even in raising the dead. When the Spirit wrought this, it wrought according to its true genius and idea as surely as when it dispelled the diseases and the death of the soul, and brought men home to God.

To sum up the whole argument of these last two chapters, it seems to me quite clear that we have here a coherent organic unity of thought. It is quite impossible, given the Old Testament and Jewish presuppositions, to regard these signs of Jesus as something accidental and external to the rest of the record, if the teaching of the Old Testament and New is as I have represented it; and if Jesus were what the Gospels suppose Him to be, the ideally pure and representative Man, and as such the Founder of the new order, then it was essential that He should work just such

“signs” (to speak broadly and generally) as they represent Him to have wrought. These signs, therefore, are integral parts of the revelation, and not adjuncts to it. They are revelations of the ideal purpose of God for mankind, and therefore of His character. They must therefore necessarily influence our idea of God. Inasmuch, also, as they imply the coming into the order of nature of powers that cannot be explained in terms of mere nature, they must inevitably affect our whole conception of the world. And, finally, as they are works wrought through the Perfect Man, and are meant by Him to be imitated by imperfect men, they must affect our conceptions of the possibilities of man, and the possibilities and range of prayer.

The Synoptics sometimes approach these signs from the human side, and speak of them as wrought through faith. But sometimes they go deeper, and speak of them as wrought by the Spirit. We are just to their whole conception only when we say that they were one and all wrought by the Spirit of God through the faith of man and, above all, through the faith of the Son of Man, “the leader and the perfection of faith” (Heb. xii. 2).

We have now completed this brief sketch of the Synoptic theory of the signs of Jesus. It is surely clear that we have here something quite different from and much more than the Traditional theory has any room for, something which is of moment for the whole system of Christian thought and life. But is it really a

tenable view to-day, or has the progress of scientific knowledge rendered it a mere archaism, believable by no man touched by the modern spirit ?

This is the inquiry to which we must now address ourselves in the following chapters.

CHAPTER IV

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

WE have in an earlier part of this volume shown that the miracles of our Lord are not an accidental but an organic part of that view of the world which we find in the Bible. The world according to the uniform witness of the Bible is created by God, is dependent on God, and is plastic in the hands of God. The last of these truths is the one which is most difficult for the modern mind to believe and to realise.

The difficulty has been created mainly by the rise and development of physical science, which appears to demand that the realm of physical nature shall be considered as rigid to all influences other than physical, in other words that it shall be regarded as a completely self-enclosed and self-explanatory system. This is what lies behind the whole conception of the Reign of Law and of the Uniformity of Nature.

What is meant by the term "self enclosed" and "self explanatory"?

That view seems to many to imply that nature is absolutely rigid to any influence beyond itself. In other words, the entire realm of nature, by which I here mean the world to which we have access through the senses, is a self-enclosed and self-

explanatory system, in which every event can be explained in terms of its physical antecedents and physical consequents. It is, of course, clear that if nature be of this type, it is absurd to suppose that there can be any intervening influence from a spiritual world deflecting or influencing any physical event whatever.

The whole literature of Revelation proceeds on quite another view. It invariably regards nature as a plastic medium through which God works out His purposes in the lives of free human spirits. The world to Him is, as it were, not like a gauntlet of steel, far less of stone, but like a silken glove.

This is the fundamental difficulty which the rise and development of modern science has created for personal religion in our modern world. The controversy over miracle is simply part of a much wider whole, and can only be understood in that larger context. The real matter at stake is the Christian doctrine of the world. We can put the issue more broadly still. It is, or rather it appears to be, between the scientific and the religious interpretation of life.

How far-reaching is this apparent clash between the scientific and the religious interpretation of life we can realise if we go into any one of our great public libraries, open to the public, according to the new system, in all its departments. On one side of a corridor we find textbooks of science in every one of which it is assumed as a matter of course that only physical forces are at work in its special domain—physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and so forth. We step over to the religious

department, and we find there the unvarying assumption that God is at work as an efficient influence and causality throughout His world, as a Providence controlling not only humanity as a whole, but individual lives through natural incidents, and as a Divine Spirit changing the psychical life, and through it influencing alike men's bodies and their outer environment.

We seem to find, in a word, two different and conflicting interpretations of the world, the one impersonal, general, and abstract, which seeks everywhere for causality and law; the other, as William James has said, "personal and romantic." This, to-day, is the real "conflict between Science and Religion," a battle along the whole line, instead of such outpost affairs as the conflict between the scientific account of man's origin and history, and the Biblical narratives of the Garden of Eden, the six days of Creation, and so forth, about which our fathers were so deeply concerned. The settlement of such outpost skirmishes, and the drawing of a distinction between what is important and what is unimportant on either side has been hailed as a reconciliation between science and religion. I think all such rejoicings are premature until a clear understanding shall have been reached on the far deeper and wider issue. That such an understanding is in process of being realised is the ultimate argument of this chapter. But we have first to dispose of some of the premature attempts at a concordat which have been attempted and which still cumber the road to a final reconciliation. The older traditional apologetics, to

begin with, drew a distinction between Divine providences and Divine answers to human prayer on the one hand, and miracles on the other. The former were in strict conformity with the "Reign of Law," whereas the latter were something more, they were direct interventions of God. The Divine action in the first two was illustrated by the action of a human father, who, it was assumed, could supervise and provide for his children without deflecting the system of natural "law." Miracle was something over and above this, to which there was nothing strictly parallel in ordinary human experience. The very fact that it was of this unique kind made it the more convincing as an unmistakable Divine confirmation of the truth of the accompanying revelation. The extension and tightening-up of the whole scientific conception of nature have made this older apologetic distinction obsolete. The Reign of Law is to-day assumed to prevail everywhere. In the earlier stages of the debate the map of the world drawn by science was only very partially filled in. It was like the old charts of Africa that some of us remember, with a thinly peopled coast-line; definite courses of rivers mapped up to a certain point inland, and then running out into dotted tracks, marking conjectures and inferences; mythical "Mountains of the Moon"—survivals from the old charts with their pictures of lions, and legends in crooked script, "Here there is much gold." There was a general idea of the prevalence throughout all the unmapped land of nature of a "reign of law." But the many gaps in the scientific account left room for

both human and Divine freedom as well as "natural law." On the other hand it was believed that wherever science had given its account of any region, it gave the complete and final account of all that was in it, and the educated man's account of the world was thus a blend of the scientific and the religious interpretation, with elements from the latter filling in the gaps of the former, and with frontier controversies about the undetermined boundaries where the two interpretations seemed to conflict. Similar controversies occurred between Science and Art.

To this transition period belong these apologetic distinctions between Divine interventions and influencings of the "course of Nature" which were in accordance with the "reign of law" and those which were beyond it.

If we are to take it that from the scientific point of view, nature (*i.e.* the realm to which we have access through our senses) is a closed physical system, every event which takes place in the sensible world must be fully accounted for in terms of its physical antecedents, and brought within the causal nexus which it is the business of science to explore. Clearly, if this theory is to be taken as giving us a final and complete view of nature, there is no vital distinction between individual Providence, objective answers to prayer, and miracle. They are all in principle the same kind of thing. In each case something happens in nature that cannot be fully explained in terms of simple nature. There is in each of them something which implies that nature is not a closed system. The tightening-up of the

idea of a general "reign of law" in Nature into the idea that Nature is a completely closed physical system has thus made this older apologetic obsolete.

Modernist theology has more or less recognised this, and has abandoned not only physical miracle but also that view of petitionary prayer which holds that it can influence the outward course of nature. It is dubious even about individual Providence. But it draws a deep distinction between the world of nature and the inner world of the soul. The real concern of science, it holds, is with physical nature. The real concern of religion is with the soul. Why then should we not definitely assign the physical realm wholly to science; reserving for religion the world of the spirit, the world of Divine and human freedom, of personal communion, the come and go of prayer and its answers, the region of struggle with temptation and victory by the aid of the Divine Spirit, the region, as Eucken asserts, of the new birth? Modernism is diverse and many-coloured and often rather hazy in its statements here. But this, I think, is its general drift if we are to take it from such exponents as Jowett and Martineau in last century and Harnack in this. Now we may fully admit that in its desire to meet science in this way Modernism was dealing with a real difficulty and was endeavouring to conserve a great human interest. For certainly the constancy of nature, of which the closed system theory is one expression, is one of the greatest human interests. The whole world of human society with all its ethical and religious possibilities depends

upon our being able to count upon that regularity of natural process without which progress would be impossible. Yet, with all this, we must hold that the compromise which it has suggested and maintained is an impossible one, and is now definitely dated and in process of being transcended by the course of thought. It belongs to a certain definitely marked stage of scientific thought which it was designed to meet. At that period science was extraordinarily dogmatic and confident of her power to give a complete and final account of nature, to get deeper than philosophy, religion, or art in her account of reality. To-day, as we shall see, self-criticism has made her less sure of her powers in these ultimate regions.

In yet another way the situation has developed. Science has now passed definitely beyond the limits drawn by the Modernist compromise. She has, for a considerable time, been trying to fill up the blank spaces in her map of knowledge. She has carried her methods further and further afield into the psychological and sociological regions, and is endeavouring to bring them all within the causal nexus, and the reign of law. A reconciliation on the lines which the earlier Modernism suggested and which still linger in its later forms is therefore no longer possible.

A concordat which is definitely repudiated by one of the parties which it seeks to conciliate, has already become matter of past history. But, in truth, it was as unsatisfactory to religion as to science. The whole conception of physical nature as a closed system, if it be taken as an ultimate

account, is, indeed, fatal to any really religious interpretation of life. The failure to understand this is the gravest error of the Modernist compromise.

Let us examine what are the inevitable consequences of treating the closed system idea of physical nature as axiomatic and final. First of all, it is quite impossible to reconcile it with human freedom. According to this view, the whole world of human action as distinct from human volition is part of the causal system of physical nature. Every action of man's physical organs, as well as every change in the tissues of his body and brain, all nerve processes, must necessarily be as truly physically determined as the movements of the clouds on the face of the heavens. They are completely accounted for when we have determined their place between their physical antecedents and consequents.

What, then, are we to make of the psychical life of man, his emotions, thoughts, and volitions? So far as man's bodily life is concerned, there is obviously nothing left for his psychical life to do, every action being already fully explained otherwise.

This was the great perplexity of the Victorian naturalism, which, in order to find some way out, invented the extraordinary theory of epiphenomenalism, which taught that the entire psychical life was a kind of ghostly accompaniment of physical processes without any influence on these processes themselves, like the shadows which accompany a train passing along a mountain-side, but which have no influence whatever on its traction. This theory was framed in large measure in order to meet the physicist's demands that the law of the

conservation of energy should hold good for the body as a merely physical machine. But if the body was merely a physical machine, whence came the psychical life? It must either remain unexplained, or it must be physically caused. But if physical energy were expended in its production and maintenance, then the world could not be a closed system. It must leak energy at every pore of the human body. Space forbids further discussion of the theory. Dr Ward's annihilating criticism in his *Naturalism and Agnosticism* left little to be said of this crude first attempt to conserve the closed system and yet find a place for consciousness, thought, and volition.

It is impossible within the limits of this chapter to give even a summary of the various "parallelism" theories of body and mind which have endeavoured in a more thorough and plausible way to conserve the idea of nature as a closed physical system, while retaining a place for the autonomy of spirit. Modernism, in so far as it holds the closed system idea, must find its speculative basis in one or other of these. It is only possible here to give the common element in all the theories and to point out its fatal weakness at the critical point.

All parallelism theories hold that nature is a complete system which at no point is influenced by spirit or influences it. The two sets of processes, material and psychical, run parallel all the way, without interlocking at any point.

When expanded into a full speculative system and extended from the soul and body of man into a theory of the Universe, one aspect of which is

supposed to be Nature and the other Spirit, with an underlying, unknown substance manifesting itself in both, parallelism has an imposing appearance and a prestige lent it by the great name of Spinoza. It is impossible adequately to discuss this most ambitious of the theories, but like all the rest, it has for all coherent Theists more than one fatal defect. All genuine Theism demands that we shall look upon the Universe as a purposive system, directed towards the creation of free human souls. These souls are by the Theistic view made in God's image and capable of communion with Him. They are, like their Maker, free purposive agents, made to seek Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Now, how can such free autonomous human life correspond point for point with a rigorously determined causal chain of physical processes? It is a sheer impossibility. Further, it would seem to follow that if man's psychical life runs rigorously parallel with its bodily counterpart, it must necessarily pass out of existence when the body dies and is resolved into its elements. Such are the insuperable difficulties which lie in wait for every Theist who plays with parallelism. There are many other equally unanswerable problems lying in wait for philosophy. Finally common sense rebels against the idea that the pleasures and pains which we experience have no influence whatever upon our bodily actions, that the volition which I make to raise my hand has no influence whatever upon the bodily action, and so on.

But these general absurdities must be left to the writers who have so thoroughly discussed the whole subject. The parallelist theory in all its

forms, like epiphenomenalism, is in fact a highly artificial theory invented to find a thinkable way out of a real difficulty. That difficulty is the direct consequence of the closed system dogma and the unworkableness of all the epiphenomenalist and parallelist theories is, in fact, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory that physical nature is a closed system. When any theory leads men to intolerably cumbrous and artificial consequences, the human mind retrieves the balance by examining its presuppositions. If it finds that any of these are questionable, it makes a fresh beginning.

This is the stage which progressive religious and scientific thought seems now to have reached, and with it to be passing away at once from the hard and fast scientific dogmatism of last century, and also from that premature attempt to effect a concordat which we have called Modernism.

In a series of striking chapters in his recent volume on *Science and the Modern World*, Professor Whitehead has shown how the growth of the mechanical scheme of science, based on the physics of Newton and the chemistry of Dalton, troubled and confused the whole higher life and thought of the nineteenth century. The scheme worked so well in the region of physical discovery and technical mastery of nature, that men thought that they had penetrated to the very heart of the Universe, and laid their hands on absolute Reality. That reality behind all the glory of nature and all the *Divina Commedia* of human life was a world of round, hard atoms like billiard balls, gyrating in space according to certain discoverable

uniformities. This was the objective truth, and all that the poets and painters and saints and prophets could tell us belonged to a purely human and subjective world. I remember once seeing a carefully painted picture of a human skull, with the grim title, "Behind the Mask." It was symbolic of the prevalent mechanistic view of the Universe of the mid-Victorian time. Behind the living and breathing earth and world of humanity men had discovered as the last reality the gaunt skeleton of Matter and Energy, or as Spencer said, "the Force from which all things proceed." To-day we have passed into a different world. It is not too much to say that the youngest and freshest thought of science itself discerns that the gaunt skeleton disclosed by the physical sciences is itself a mask of something or Some One deeper still, in other words, that in itself science can only give us an aspect of reality.

Many factors have contributed to this conclusion. The world of values has asserted itself. No system of cosmic interpretation that is in fundamental strife with the highest intuitions of the artist and the prophet can permanently hold the mind of man.

Moreover, the mere growth of scientific knowledge, the new developments in physics, and in particular the expansion of biology and psychology have strained the mechanistic theory, under which science has achieved many victories in other spheres of inquiry, beyond the breaking-point. The present condition of chemistry for instance has been compared to that of the Ptolemaic

theory of astronomy, which became so complicated and difficult by the mere growth of knowledge and the framing of subsidiary hypotheses to restore its validity, that the simpler Copernican theory had an easy triumph.

Finally, we may fairly claim that the mere advance of Epistemology has given the final blow to the dogmatic tyranny of the mechanistic Victorian science. Yet it was with a view to conciliate this now weakened dogmatism that the Modernist concordat with its rejection of miracle, of special Providence, and of outward answers to prayer came into being, and it bears therefore on its very face the marks of this vanishing order of thought. It is as clear as daylight that we must reconsider the whole position relative to miracle not only in the light of the whole Christian doctrine of the world, of which it was from the first a part, but in the light of that fascinating but as yet inchoate world of new scientific outlook which is coming into being.

But, to return, it is necessary to reiterate that what religion has to think of first is not the specific question of the miraculous, but the much larger question of the Christian doctrine of the world, of which the other is only a part.

With that doctrine we cannot realise too clearly that the dogma of the closed system of nature is in diametrical opposition. Both cannot be true. Now, in what way does the modern movement in science and in philosophy ease the tension of the whole situation, and open up the way for final reconciliation ?

It is, of course, impossible here to give anything but a bare summary of the difference between the scientific outlook half a century ago and to-day, as it presents itself to one who is interested mainly in the epistemological side of science, and has no claim to be anything but an outsider in the realm of science itself.

In the closing years of the Victorian period the dispassionate scientific outlook was contrasted by many of its supporters with the religious outlook, which was simply the pathetic illusion created by man's hopes. God, said Feuerbach, was the projection on the heavens of man's own shadow, the Brocken phantom of his desires. To base one's beliefs on one's emotional needs, said Huxley, was "immoral." Over against this interested view of the Universe stood the absolutely disinterested, final, and demonstrated interpretation of science. We have the same contrast asserted to-day by the Marxian materialism. Scientific knowledge gives us reality. Religion is "dope," the opiate invented for the proletariat by capitalism.

The poets mirrored the difficult position.

Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, elected for faith, but obviously was gravely troubled by the supposed conflict with "freezing reason."

"Like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up, and answered, 'I have felt.'"

In the last issue he accepted the position that religion was a matter of feeling, but asserted its rights none the less as based somehow on true knowledge.

Matthew Arnold elected for doubt—

“Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.”

To-day we can give a much more adequate vindication of faith as the highest reason, and on the other hand the whole scientific method has been exposed to rigorous analysis by some of its own leading exponents. The general result of that analysis has been that, far from being an absolutely disinterested instrument, the scientific method is much liker a calculus than a philosophy. In its formation, and in the formation of ordinary common-sense knowledge, of which it is only a more fully developed form, two practical aims have all along been prominent, the description and the forecasting of phenomena.

Man finds himself in the heart of a vast phantasmagoria of sense phenomena of infinite variety and complexity. He has the will to live, but he very soon discovers that in order to live he must do something much more than stand passively contemplating the great sense-pageant which is continually sweeping over and around and beneath him. He must in some way devise means to ward off those painful and destroying phenomena which we call hunger, disease, pain, and, above all, that termination of his experience which we call death. He must for this end be able to share his experiences and thoughts with others, in other words to describe them; and together they must also learn to forecast what is coming next in the great phantasmagoria, and make provision for it. Out of these two necessities, description and forecast, arises our

ordinary conceptual "common-sense" knowledge, and the scientific view of things which is only a greatly refined and developed form of the other. To this latter we shall in the main confine ourselves, as the greater includes the less.

There are three outstanding methods of scientific knowledge by which these practical ends of description and forecast are attained—classification, analysis, and the discovery of uniform processes, analogically called "laws."¹

(1) *Classification*.—The human mind would be absolutely overpowered and paralysed by the multitude and variety of the phenomena which are continually appearing and disappearing, and it would be utterly unable to have any social life or community of thought with others unless it had invented the process of classifying and conceptualising. An infinite Intelligence would have no need of any such device as conceptual thinking. It springs from man's finitude, but none the less it is an immense advance upon mere instinct and automatic reaction. By it man is able to form concepts and common terms. He groups certain things or persons together, by observing similarities and ignoring differences, and he arranges the whole under common terms, so that he can talk rationally about them with his fellows. Conceptual thinking thus marks man's advance beyond the animal, the instinctive, and the automatic.

Scientific classification is a great extension of this

¹ See Canon Streeter's volume on *Reality*, chapter iv. to which in this section I am indebted for frequent clearing of my own thoughts.

method. Every new science must necessarily begin with this ordering and arrangement of its data, by this device of finite thought. Its purpose is defined by Mill (*Logic*, book iv., chap. vii., section 1) as follows: "to secure that things shall be thought of in such groups, and those groups in such an order, as will best conduce to the remembrance and the ascertainment of their laws."

Now it is quite clear that this can only be done by ignoring certain differences and by emphasising similarities in the phenomena classified together—*i.e.* by a certain suppression of what is really there. At the bottom of the scale of existences, in the purely physical region, where there is far more resemblance between the objects classified than there is higher up the ladder, this may not matter much, but the higher up the scale of being we go, the more does individuality count. There is, for instance, a far greater difference between one animal and another than there is between two molecules of a material substance, and *a fortiori* there is incomparably more difference between one human being and another.

We have here, it is clear, a grave limitation of the purely inductive method which inheres in its very nature, the inability of a method which is continually in quest of general truths and laws to deal with individuality.

Why is it that any one of us would feel insulted if he were told that he must think so and so, or act in a certain way because he belonged to a certain nationality or social class? Is it not because we feel that the offender is deliberately ignoring our

individuality? Yet in doing so, he is following the inductive method of classification. Be it noted, that the defect inheres in the method as such. The failure in any case lies not in bad classification, nor in an incomplete classification. It lies in the fact that, as regards the point at issue, there is a classification at all. Every rational human being knows that, for good or ill, he is not quite the same as any of his fellows. We seem, then, to have discovered at the very roots of the inductive method clear indication of the impossibility of science giving us a final and complete account of any man.

(2) We pass on to another essential of scientific method, *Analysis*. Still pursuing its quest for the power to describe and forecast phenomena, science follows the method of analysis. This is as essential a part of its method as the synthetic process of classification. An apparently simple phenomenon baffles it in its quest for a law. But it lays siege to it and shows that it is made up of parts, and then is able to bring the parts under the law. So science has worked its way back from the molecule to the atom, and from the atom to the electron. Whether it will stop there, who can say?

Now it is often possible to divide inorganic things without getting away from reality. We can usually assemble the parts again. But we cannot do that with living things without losing something irreparable. Wordsworth felt that of the living world of nature, and, as Professor Whitehead has shown, was deeply at odds with the scientific spirit of his time, and put his indictment in a pungent line, "We murder to dissect." That is to say, when we try

to dissolve a living thing into parts, its essence disappears. So is it always with individuality, as the very name should show us. It cannot be divided. So it eludes both classification and analysis. It cannot be completely divided any more than it can be generalised. Whatever pathological states of a human being may alternate in the field of a human consciousness so that a man thinks himself "legion," as in the Gospels, or as in the well-known instance of "divided personality" recounted by Dr Morton Prince, the personality is never really divided into other personalities. No sane observer of either case partook of the same illusion as did the patient. You cannot really divide a personality without annihilating it.

(3) *Law*.—Finally, the ultimate aim of all science is to forecast the future and so to win control over nature. It seeks the power of prevision with a view to provision. Its aim is therefore to discover uniformities or "laws" in nature such that, when we can bring any one phenomenon under them, we shall be able to count on its recurrence and prepare for what is coming next. These uniformities by analogy with human society are called "laws" of nature. The sovereign importance of this orderliness in nature, indeed its absolute practical necessity for human life and for the very existence and growth of all forms of rational society, is clear. If the same food sometimes poisoned and sometimes nourished life, if fire did not always warm, if harvest did not result from sowing, in a word, if nature were capricious instead of orderly, how impossible civilised existence would be! Science is

thus always seeking for laws of phenomena, and when it has found and formulated them, it is always seeking to bring new facts under them, by classification and analysis, and so to be able to predict or cause the succession of these facts in the future.

Another way of putting the same thing is to say that science is always seeking for causes. It has long been shown that so far as strict science is concerned, this means simply uniform sequences. Cause is a metaphysical idea.

Now the more we study all the forms of the inductive arguments, the more clear does it become that every one of them and the whole process of induction rests for its validity upon one great conviction, the belief in the Uniformity of Nature. In all induction we start out from the conviction that, however disordered and mixed up the processes of nature may appear, they are in reality all ordered, and in all our classifying, observing, and analysing, our persistent motive is to discover that order.

The strength of this fundamental conviction is forcibly brought out by Sigwart in his great treatise on *Logic*.² "However we may fail in our attempts to subordinate the world of perception to a complete conceptual system and to deduce all events from universally valid laws, we never doubt the truth of our principles. We still maintain that even the worst confusion is capable of being resolved into comprehensible formulæ; again and again we start our work anew and believe—not that nature opposed an inexorable refusal to our endeavours—

² Vol. ii. p. 17, E.T.

but only that as yet we have failed to find the right way; but this perseverance is due to the conviction that we ought not to despair of the accomplishment of our task, and the energy of the explorer is sustained by the obligatory force of a moral idea."

Now what is the origin of this rooted conviction that, however chaotic she may appear, Nature is really orderly, which makes us assume this and stick to it in spite of constant frustration? To point to the advance of science and the gradual discovery of order in those parts of Nature where the hypothesis of uniformity has been put to the test, and to argue that therefore the same uniformity will be found everywhere else, is to beg the whole question. We can show no sufficient logical reason at all for our faith in the universal uniformity of nature. Who can tell but that beyond the relatively small mapped-out region we may at any moment come upon tracts of pure chaos? Why in all the laboratories and observatories of the world are thousands of investigators still going on attacking that chaos sustained by that brave and perisistent faith of which Sigwart speaks?

It is a truly wonderful spectacle, and it becomes not the less but the more wonderful when we realise the fact on which I think logicians are now generally agreed,³ that this great sustaining condition

³ Professor Whitehead has recently made the interesting suggestion that in Europe we owe the peculiar intensity of this confidence in the rationality of nature out of which science has sprung to the mediæval schooling in the rationality of God. This is probably true, but I believe the roots lie deeper in universal common-sense knowledge.—*Science and the Modern World*, pp. 14, 15.

is in truth a postulate, that we owe it to the will, and to a certain deep and vital faith that nature is on the side of all that man counts most dear in his earthly life. Have we not here that same primitive "trustfulness" which, as Dr Ward has said, leads all living things to make adventures, and has impelled them to advance from the waters to the land and from the land to the air ?

But assuredly the assumption that the whole vast natural Universe must be orderly is seen to be an adventure of singular audacity when we think of the tiny little "home-farm of Earth," which is our abode, and the enormous Universe of which it is an infinitesimal fraction.

But if such be the nature of the very foundations of science, it will clearly not do for us to claim for its account of the Universe that complete disinterestedness and finality which the Victorian scientific age claimed for it, or to treat it as more than one way among others of conceiving and of handling the world. The marvellous success of the postulate indeed shows that there must be something in the very construction of nature, so far as we know her, friendly to human interests and akin to human thought, something deeply encouraging to those who desire to make further assumptions of faith in the moral purpose of the Universe. But in the light of the disclosure of the real nature of the postulate which underlies all scientific thought, it does not lie with science to arrogate to itself the claim to be more than a successful method of describing and forecasting the processes of nature. Does it carry us further ? Can we say that it can

completely explore and describe and forecast "the abysmal deeps of personality"? That it has been endeavouring to extend our knowledge of that microcosm within the macrocosm, we know. But of psychology, both old and new, we can say two things. First of all, like biology, only in a greater degree, inasmuch as it too is concerned with general concepts and laws, it can never fully explain any human being. Laws can only deal with uniformities of action. They are, indeed, as has been said, simply uniformities formulated in order that we may bring new facts under them for description and for forecast.

Now let us take our most intimate friend and try to describe him in terms of all that physics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, psychology, and sociology can do. As we build up our portentous description of abstractions, we may recognise that each particular specification contributed by all the relevant sciences is true, and when we add them all together they may enrich to a large extent our knowledge of him. They are all true, so far as they go, but can any human being say that this complex of abstractions is the very man? Something vital and momentous has slipped through all the meshes of all the nets. Something, it is true, remains; something which he has in common with a multitude of other men, but the man himself is not there! The description has failed. This is verified when, in the second place, we turn from description to forecast. Has science succeeded here? We all know that science has done nothing of the kind, that all our knowledge of all the relevant sciences cannot

enable us definitely to predict what any waking and rational human individual will be thinking, saying, or doing in an hour, still less a month, and still less a year from now. This is the more remarkable when we think of the astonishing accuracy of scientific precision in physical matters. You can tell with absolute certainty what a planet will do, but what transit instrument will reveal the journey of a man?

Now there are still highly intelligent people who cherish the idea that this admitted uncertainty as to what human beings will do or become is due to the fact that as yet we do not know all the laws of psychology.

Herbert Spencer compared this uncertainty to the uncertainty we have as to the precise pathways that will be taken by the fragments of a bursting shell. We can tell where the shell will fall, but we cannot beforehand locate the shards. The uncertainty in the latter case, he said, is plainly due simply to our own ignorance of many facts about the explosive and the shell. But if we knew these, as we can learn to know them, we would be able to locate each pathway to a certainty. So is it with human beings. If we push on with the various sciences involved, we shall in time be able to forecast human action as accurately as planetary movement. Do not insurance tables imply that we know what men in the mass will do? Push the method further and you will be able to forecast everything that the individual will do, also.

This is a mere dream. The same reason which prevents the scientific description of your friend ever being anything but a cumbrous and lifeless

model of him, will absolutely preclude all the scientific knowledge of him which you can acquire from enabling you completely to forecast his actions and thoughts. The reason of this is, as I have said, that in the very nature of the case no abstract scientific description can ever give you the individuality of the man, and without knowing that you cannot predict what he will do.

But, it may be said, I am not so ignorant as all that of what my friend is, and to a certain extent, of what he will do. I have a knowledge of him other than that cumbrous scientific model, and I do know his character, so that, barring my uncertainties as to the environments in which he may be placed, which uncertainty is largely due to my (removable) ignorance, I can tell, generally, how he will respond to them. I know his individuality and his character, and these give me confidence.

That is, of course, perfectly true. But the essential point is that you do not have that individual knowledge through science. It comes to you in quite a different way, through what Bergson calls intuition. We know our own personalities not through generalising about them but by immediate knowledge, and through that knowledge we have the clue to other personalities, and are enabled thereby to interpret their actions and characters and truly to know them as individuals like ourselves, though so unique a thing is individuality that even with this new source of knowledge we can never exhaustively fathom or truly, definitely, and completely forecast the action of even our most intimate friend.

To sum up the argument, science has wonderfully extended the range of human knowledge. By its means we have immensely developed our power of describing and of forecasting and controlling nature, and secured so great an increase of comprehension, and of enjoyment of life, that men have been led gravely to exaggerate its possibilities. But in its very nature it is subject to certain uncertainties and limitations. It cannot give us final truth about anything, and by its very nature, also, it cannot explain so great a reality in human experience and in the higher range of nature as individuality. Yet individuality is unquestionably there functioning in all living things, and above all in human life, reacting on the living body, and through it upon the spatial and ponderable world of nature.

It is as certain that we act as that we are. Personality certainly functions in the nature world. We do not simply contemplate, we influence or change nature. I can move my body and alter the physical dispositions of the objects around me, and my individuality counts in this. But if that be so, clearly, then nature is not a completely closed system. It is to a certain extent plastic to the influence of my personal volitions. Either this is true, or, to reason back, science can completely explain personality, and in that case each of us can be completely described in strictly general terms, can be wholly subsumed under universal laws, and in spite of the clamant witness of language the individual can be divided. Dissection can in a word be done without

murder. We can completely describe each man without going beyond what is common to him and other men, and sooner or later we shall be able to predict what any man will do at any moment as accurately as a transit instrument can track the path of a planet. On such a view, of course, freedom vanishes. Either we must face these incredible consequences or we must abandon the idea that physical nature is a closed system, and must admit that up to a certain point she is plastic in the hands of man, because she does what cannot be fully explained in terms of physical law.

This, I take it, is what Lord Kelvin had before him when he wrote the much canvassed opinion that from the point of view of science every free human action was a miracle. He meant that voluntary human action is inexplicable in scientific terms.

We pass here a step beyond saying that science can only deal with an aspect of reality, a truth which might be held by a parallelist, to a further statement of its essential limitations. Pure science cannot give us a complete account even of what goes on in what we know as the material world, as, for instance, my bodily actions. There are and must be events in the physical realm which cannot be exhaustively described in terms of physical causation, events which are fully historic, but of which science can never give an account. I see nothing in the methods of inductive logic to preclude this. If the uniformity of Nature be a simple postulate, and if the inductive methods be, as I believe they are, "a net to catch certain kinds of

fish, and to let other fish through," there is no antecedent obstacle to such a position. Among these escaping fish that argument would compel us to put many of man's physical actions and achievements in the physical regions. They do not contravene the natural laws, they simply elude them. They cannot be described fully by science, and, as we should expect, they cannot be accurately predicted by science. To this elusion of biological science by much of the realm of human action we may find a significant analogy in biology itself. Dr Haldane in his Gifford lectures, which are being delivered while these words are being written, finds himself compelled to discard both the mechanical and the vitalist theories of life. He is clear that the characteristics of living things cannot be fully accounted for in terms of physical and chemical mechanism. Yet, with the great majority of biologists, he discards the conception of a special vital force interposing to overrule chemical processes as too crude to account for the phenomena of life. How does he meet the situation? He supposes that the physical and chemical sciences do not give a complete account even of their own inorganic domain. Something is present even there that eludes their nets. We can at present give no adequate account of what it is. But when living things appear it manifests itself in their peculiar characteristics. It has escaped the meshes of the nets of the physicist and chemist, but it is detected by the biologist. Have we any reason to suppose that the nets of the biologist have captured everything that there is in man? If there is something

in man that stubbornly refuses to be described in purely biological terms and that cannot be predicted, have we not precisely the same right as the biologist has, as in the other case, to say that even his marvellous science cannot say the final word about humanity? We can, I believe, as has been said, go further still and say that no inductive science, not even psychology and sociology themselves, can ever give us an exhaustive account of human history.

Now if this reasoning has been sound, we must abandon the idea that it is any necessary dogma of science that nature is in itself a rigid system, impervious and inflexible to the spiritual world.

We shall see in Chapter V how the whole dogma originated from a very natural fallacy of reasoning. Meantime it is enough to say that it leads not only to other impossible conclusions, but that it fails to take any adequate account of individuality and the difference which individuality makes in nature. Finally we have seen that the real nature we know is to a great extent plastic to the influences exerted upon it by the free human spirit. Man can be a providence to his children within that realm of nature, he can hear and answer their prayers; and if Lord Kelvin was right, he can produce effects in nature which from the point of view of science are miracles. We press the question—If these things are possible to man, are they impossible to God? If He be the Almighty Father of Humanity, are they even unlikely?

It is along these lines, opened up by the development of scientific logic itself, and not imposed

upon it by the demands of theology, that there lies the real prospect of a definite and final reconciliation between the abstract and general view of science and the "personal and romantic" view of religion, between the view which holds that the world of nature is rigid, and that it is plastic in the hands of God. The necessity for supposing it rigid arises only when we insist that the scientific view gives a complete and final account of nature. When this is abandoned there is room for the poet, room for the moralist, and room for the whole religious interpretation of the world. There remains in a word no reason why both the scientific and religious views of the world should not be true. The scientific view corresponds to the Registrar-General's returns—so many births, deaths, marriages and so forth in the year. All such details are indispensable for a country's political, economic, and hygienic life. But over and above these how much there is that only the historian, the novelist, the poet, or the musician can teach us! Is that all? Surely the last and deepest word of all lies with the man of faith, who lives by listening for the Divine Voice and reaching out for the Divine Hand.

But if it be so the whole Modernist repudiation of the miracles of Jesus loses its real intellectual basis.

These unique deeds are seen to be the natural results within a Spiritual Universe of the appearance of a unique Personality. But they are unique in degree, not in kind.

CHAPTER V

NATURE AND MORALITY

AT the beginning of this volume we called attention to the singular paradox that whereas, in the first age of Christianity the miracles of Jesus were regarded as glories of the faith, which the Church up to its powers sought to imitate, as charismata or graces of the Spirit, to-day they are regarded by many as among its chief difficulties. In the historical review there given I have sought to show how the change came about, by the gradual rise of the conception of the Reign of Law in nature, which has to-day developed into the further idea that physical nature is a completely self-enclosed system of physical causes and effects.

The practical adoption of this idea from contemporary science by much current idealism and also current Modernist theology has led many to identify the "laws of Nature" with the laws of God, and under the influence of this confusion to confine the sphere of petitionary prayer to purely spiritual matters, and to rule out the whole conception of "miracle" as obsolete, inasmuch as it was supposed to imply an interference by God with His own laws. In the last chapter we have seen how partial and belated this concept of Nature has become, and how necessary it has also

become for Modernist thinkers to reconsider their over-hasty concession to the supposed necessities of science.

But there is still another cause of the extraordinary revolution of which I have spoken. Modernist religious thought, under the influence of science and philosophical idealism, has moved away from the fundamental Biblical idea of the deep and vital connection between man's sins and the outward evils of this life, the tragic element in human experience, famine, disease, and premature death.

The contrast between the prevailing thought of our day and that of the Old Testament and the first Christian age is that whereas the modern mind is perfectly willing to admit and enforce the connection between ignorance and death, it is wholly scornful of there being any relation whatever between sin and death. Hence that which gave their chief meaning and glory to the "signs" of Jesus and to His Resurrection has been wellnigh lost by the men of to-day. Their very defenders have forgotten to defend them on this ground, and regard them merely as signs of Divine power, and the last thing the apologists of to-day think of is precisely the thing which made them so attractive to the apologists of the first age. To these they were the supreme signs that the tragic powers of both sin and death were broken, and the true idea of the Divine Creator was at last being visibly realised, and would be completed even in this suffering, sorrowing, and dying world of men. To them the miracles of Jesus were "signs" of the coming of

heaven to earth, anticipation of the triumph of spirit, as the charm of the first spring flowers is that they are the heralds of all the glories of coming summer.

From these two causes, the rise of the idea of a rigid natural order and the weakening of the idea of a moral order in the world of nature, it has come about that what to the first Christian age were manifestations, are to us interruptions of the Divine Order. We have transferred our conception of the Divine Order from the moral to the physical region.

We have now, therefore, fairly to face the question whether this fundamental idea of the Bible that sin leads inevitably not only to moral and spiritual decay but to outward tragedy and physical calamity of all kinds, is obsolete, or whether it is and must ever be a living and formidable part of the Christian interpretation of life. Is it, or is it not, true that "sin" leads to "death"?

The question to-day is closed for many because they think it is inseparably associated with the story of Eden—the coming of death into the human world and Adam's sin. The real question has little or nothing to do with the myth. Every real student of the Bible knows that the principle that sin always works on toward death and woe goes through it all from beginning to end. The myth, as Dr Denney has said, was created by the faith, not the faith by the myth. The faith as distinct from the myth grew out of the Hebrew idea of God as an ethical being, and is, as I hope to show, still inseparable from any fully thought-out Theism.

Why is the faith for the moment in an eclipse which throws several of the vital ideas of Christianity as it were, out of focus, depriving them of half their meaning and power? I do not know any one who has put the matter so incisively as Dr Denney.

"Probably the most widespread idea," he writes, "about the relation of the natural to the spiritual world is that which simply contrasts them. They are realities which stand apart, which do not interpenetrate, which are simply neutral to each other. At the utmost, nature is that stage on which the moral life is transacted. But it is quite indifferent to the quality of that life. The laws of nature are the same for the good man as for the bad: the flood drowns them both, and the lightning does not go out of the way of either. It is even argued that this moral neutrality of nature is necessary to protect the integrity of the moral life. If nature immediately sided with virtue and opposed vice, if she did justice on her stage at every turn, disinterested goodness would be impossible: men would never be able to prove that they loved goodness for its own sake. Without disputing the amount of truth that there is in this view, it is apparent that it is not adequate to the depth and subtlety of the facts. Nature is not merely the stage of the moral life, but in some sense its soil. The moral life is not merely transacted in the face of nature: it is rooted in it, and grows up in profound and vital relations to it. The nature which is absolutely severed from the spiritual life—which does nothing but confront it in serene

or scornful impartiality—is not the real nature in which we live and move and have our being. It is one of the abstractions which physical science constructs for its own convenience, but which are apt to mislead rather than enlighten in philosophy or theology. The only real nature is that to which we and our spiritual experiences are vitally related, and our problem is not to acquiesce in the idea of the ethical neutrality of nature . . . but to see in it, in the last result, the manifestation, the organ, the ally of God. The universe is a system of things in which good can be planted, and in which it can bear fruit; it is also a system of things in which there is a ceaseless and unrelenting reaction against evil. This view of nature is vital both to the doctrine of sin and to that of reconciliation.”¹ I would add to this last sentence that it is vital also to faith in the Divine Providence, and in the power of prayer to influence natural events, as also to the understanding of the “miracles” of the New Testament in particular, and, above all, those of our Lord.

In the above passage Dr Denney points out that the thinking of the modern mind with which he is dealing has its origin in the scientific method of dealing abstractly with all its problems. It views each field in which for the moment it is working, *e.g.*, physics, chemistry, and biology, in abstraction from other areas—*i.e.*, as if it were a separate and complete field of knowledge. It assumes, as a working postulate, the independence of its own field. As a matter of fact, all the areas

¹ *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, pp. 201, 202.

are interconnected in the great web of nature, and interact with each other. But the investigator gets to work as if it were not so. Now what is perfectly admissible as a working method leads to the gravest errors, if we forget the "let it be granted" with which we started and exalt the postulate into a dogma. This is precisely what has happened with the inclusive abstraction of "Nature," which science has framed to describe the total world of sense phenomena. Nature in this sense is in fact only a part of a much larger whole, the total world of the Universe, with which it is in interrelation and interaction. It is in this abstraction and in its evolution into a dogma that we find the roots of that fallacy of the "closed system" idea of nature, and of nature's moral neutrality which has caused such mischievous and widespread confusion in the period of thought from which we are now emerging. What confusion and distress it has caused since the days of Mill's famous outburst on the crimes of "Nature" let one or two often-quoted passages bear witness. In the most remarkable of all his essays, the Romanes Lecture of 1893, Huxley, to the dismay of his fellow-evolutionists, impeached the Cosmic process in language almost as vehement as that of Mill. "The Cosmic process" (*i.e.*, "Nature") encourages "ruthless self-assertion," the "thrusting aside of all competitors," and teaches the "gladiatorial theory of existence. It has no sort of relation to moral ends." "The imitation of it by man is inconsistent with the first principles of ethics." The conclusion is inevitable: "Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical

progress of Society depends not on imitating the Cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it." A decade or two later Mr Bertrand Russell, in one of his chameleon phases of philosophic outlook, gives equally passionate expression to his sense of man's pitiful case in the presence of an almighty and indifferent Nature. He is impressed by the appalling contrast between man's moral ideals of justice, mercy, and truth, and the brutal world of reality in which man finds himself imprisoned. He is perfectly certain that there is nothing to be said for a God over both. In such dismaying conditions what can a free man do to keep his soul alive? How in such an alien and inhuman world can so powerless a creature as man preserve his aspirations untarnished? "A strange mystery it is that Nature, omnipotent but blind, in the revolutions of her secular hurrying through the abysses of space, has brought forth at last a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight, with knowledge of good and evil, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking Mother. In spite of Death, the mark and seal of the parental control, Man is yet free during his brief years to examine, to criticise, to know, and in imagination—to execute. To him alone in the world with which he is acquainted, this belongs; and in this lies his superiority to the resistless forces that control his natural life." A fierce passage follows in which Mr Russell condemns mere acquiescence in and flattery of the ways of Nature. "The religion of Moloch—as such creeds may be generically called—is in essence

the cringing submission of the slave who does not love in his heart. Since the independence of ideals is not yet acknowledged, Power may be freely worshipped, and receive an unlimited respect despite its wanton infliction of pain. When we have realised that Power is largely bad, that man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge, the choice is again presented to us. Shall we worship Force or shall we worship Goodness? Shall our God resist the evil or shall He be recognised as the creation of our own goodness? ”²

In citing these indictments of Mill, Huxley, and Russell, we have certainly travelled a long way from Wordsworth.

Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege
 Through all the years of this our life to lead
 From joy to joy : for she can so inform
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgments nor the sneers of selfish men
 Nor greetings, where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the noon
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk,
 And let the misty mountain winds be free
 To blow against thee.

* Phil. Essays, *A Free Man's Worship*, pp. 66-68, ed. 1910.

There is something more here than mere contrast, there is downright contradiction. We are filled with sheer bewilderment. How can ordinary intelligent men, and still more, how can men of uncommon mental distinction take such glaringly opposite views of Nature? It is hardly too much to say that while to the poet Nature, in her relations with men, is a Divinity, to the men of science quoted she is, except that they look on her as unconscious, a kind of devil. We can only really account for so singular a contradiction when we realise that they mean different things by the same term, Nature. In Wordsworth we have the religious view of Nature, which is synoptic in character, Nature as part of a great whole in which God is working out supreme ethical and spiritual ends. The assurance as to this enables him, unlike these others, to feel that he is not living in an alien but in a friendly world, and in the beauty of Nature to find a sacrament and a benediction.

The Nature which the others are thinking of is a Nature which for purposes of scientific investigation has been severed from its context in the whole, severed on one side from God and on the other from man, and assumed to be uninfluenced by, and unconscious of, either. In other words, we have an "idol" of the study and the laboratory, created by a logical blunder, substituted for the Nature that we used to know. The perplexity and trouble caused by this to men, who have to a large extent retained the Christian moral values, is sufficiently obvious to all sympathetic readers of these three remarkable essays.

We have in the past century had all kinds of attempted reconstructions of belief based on the attempt to combine what was felt to be most precious in the moral and spiritual inheritance of the past with this supposed intellectual necessity, that Nature should be regarded as a closed physical system, closed, in effect, from both God and man, indifferent to moral and spiritual distinctions, bent only on maintaining the uniformity of her own working. The idea, as we have seen, had an almost hypnotic influence on the great Victorians. They were not always in the same mind as the essayists of whom I have spoken. Sometimes they made the best of it, and found something glorious in the serene neutrality of Nature, and desired it for themselves rather than the feverish action and passions of men.

From the intense clear star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night air came the answer,
Wouldst thou be as these are, live as they ?

And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll,
For, self-poised they live nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers outpouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.

So sang Matthew Arnold. How he reconciled it with his faith that over the neutrality of Nature was "a Power not ourselves that makes for right-

eousness," I do not know that he ever explained. But there were various other attempts at synthesis. I think that probably most Victorian Modernists who gave serious and educated thought to the problem so poignantly put by Huxley in the Romanes Lecture, and who saw the impossibility of his view that mere "Nature" could produce a being higher than herself, and accepted therefore some Theistic or at least idealistic view of the Universe, effected their synthesis in some such way as this.

"Nature," in effect they said, "is a self-enclosed, neutral system. It is God's instrument for creating and disciplining souls. It may have other purposes, but this is the one that most clearly reveals its Creator's purpose, for His nature is most plainly manifest in man's ideals. But in order to be His instrument or tool, Nature must be herself. Just as a weapon or tool of man must first be itself, if it is to be of any use to him, must have its constant weight, shape, and edge, so Nature must have her own determinate constant properties and laws of operation. To observe these is her one concern, as God's servant. He will do the rest in the making of souls." Here we have a really serious attempt at synthesis, though I doubt if the last sentence is any longer relevant, since science has thrown the network of the causal judgment beyond what used to be called Nature, into the psychological and sociological realm, and refuses to recognise that there is any region into which she cannot come and completely explain. If the purely scientific view be a complete and final view, there seems to be nothing left for God to do, and the scientific

account must completely displace the religious interpretation.

But independently of this, is this synthesis of God, a closed and morally neutral system of Nature and man, really a complete and satisfactory account of the processes of Nature and history ?

First of all, it is obviously Deistic in its form. We seem back in the position which Carlyle satirised, "An absentee God sitting outside His world, watching it go !"

There is surely something defective, something savouring fatally of the mechanistic idea of nature, in the middle term of the three—which we have borrowed from the laboratory of science, to fit into a triad of which the other two members are derived from other regions, religious faith and personal intuition. Has not God put something of Himself into Nature, then, and still more into man, other than science can give any account of ? If so, Nature is more than a tool, and man more than an external product.

But without departing from the closed system idea of Nature, we may, perhaps, get a better simile to describe her than a tool. Nature is like a great factory, which for its smooth and efficient running needs to have its hard and fast laws for all its operatives, even though they be members of the owner's own family. And we may even think of it as a factory designed not only to turn out carpets or hardware, but to train manufacturers on a smaller scale ! But the more we humanise the illustration, the more, that is to say, we get down to realities, the more we shall be in danger of departing from

the closed system idea altogether. It becomes impossible to think of such a factory system as being ever in absolute moral neutrality to the conduct of the family under training. The illustration, as we try to bring it more into agreement with plain facts, breaks down in our hands.

But it is time now to raise the question that has been lurking in the background all along. Is it really true to the facts to say that the great system of Nature, as we know it, is absolutely indifferent to the moral character and conduct of the men and women who live within it? Is it true, as Huxley and Russell, in their passionate revolt against the tyranny of the Nature in which they believe, seem sometimes to say, that Nature is actually hostile to man's highest ideals? If the picture which these draw of the "cosmic order" and "Nature" be literally true, then the whole religious interpretation of Nature must, of course, go by the board, as well as all idealistic thought and morality. But is either picture true, the picture which makes Nature neutral to human right or wrong, or the picture which makes her hostile to right?

It will be enough for our purpose if we can show that the picture of her neutrality is radically distorted, and to this we shall at present confine our argument. Current idealism intimidated, I think, by the closed-system idea of Nature, is curiously vague here. It seems simply to take over the current scientific idea and include it without question in its synthesis. We may turn again for information to Professor Whitehead's review of nineteenth-century thought.

"This idealistic school . . . has swallowed the scientific scheme in its entirety as being the only rendering of the facts of Nature, and has thus explained it as being an idea in the ultimate mentality. In the case of absolute idealism, the world of nature is just one of the ideas, somehow differentiating the unity of the Absolute: in the case of pluralistic Idealism involving monadic mentalities, this world is the greatest common measure of the various ideas which differentiate the various mental unities of the various monads. But, however you take it, these idealistic schools have conspicuously failed to connect, in any organic fashion, the fact of Nature with their idealistic philosophies."³

In most, at least, of the versions of it familiar to me, modern idealism would come a long way short of accepting Dr Denney's sweeping statement, "The Universe is a system of things in which there is a ceaseless and unrelenting reaction against evil," as it would certainly regard the whole Biblical idea of sin leading to "death," and righteousness to "life," as an obsolete idea.

The general idea of Nature held by current idealism seems rather to be that of a resisting medium in conflict with which the human reason—speculative and practical—is kindled into a glow of intellectual and moral insight, hard experience awaking its *a priori* powers, even as the resistance of the marble awakens the slumbering genius of the sculptor. In this way the idea of Nature

³ *Science and the Modern World*, p. 93.

as absolutely neutral is preserved, and all the stress of evolution thrown on man's reason. But the marble itself does not differentiate between the sculptor's true and false intuitions of beauty. It is passive, inert, neutral. It does not strike back at him when he goes wrong, nor reward him of itself when he goes right! But it compels him to struggle with it as Jacob struggled with the angel, and the struggle somehow develops, and awakens the man's personality and conscience, his latent powers of discovering good and evil.

This is true and profound up to a certain point. But I do not think it implies, as the Bible does, that sin always brings suffering of one kind or other, either to the sinner himself or others, or that the world is such that it reacts against men and nations who identify themselves with evil, and favours men and nations who identify themselves with good.

Now there is certainly much in man's moral nature that is utterly incapable of being derived from experience of the happy consequences of virtuous living and the tragedies that result from moral failure. The story of man's moral as of his intellectual progress is not so much the story of the making as of the awakening of personalities to the eternal environment that lies behind the natural.

But we buy our conservation of the idea that Nature is a complete and self-enclosed physical system much too dear, at the expense of the sacrifice of too many of the plain facts of the history of man's moral development, if that purchase compels us to hold to the view that Nature is morally neutral towards human right and wrong, and concerned

simply with maintaining her own uniform and orderly physical working.

At first sight, it is true, the facts appear to bear out this view so irresistibly that there seems no need to suppose that we need attribute it to any such far-fetched cause as the laboratory concept of the closed system of Nature. Does not simple observation of everyday life compel the view of the inhuman neutrality of Nature to man's good and evil deeds, and contradict the crude old idea that sin leads to death ?—

Yet even when man forsakes
All sin,—is just, is pure,
Abandons all which makes
His welfare insecure,—
Other existences there are that clash with ours.

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room :
Nor is that wind less rough
That blows a good man's barge.

Nature with equal mind
Sees all her sons at play ;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away ;
Allows the proudly riding and the foundering bark.⁴

Yet, somehow, the same writer constantly asserted, as has been said above, there is " a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." We may fairly ask, " What does He *do* ? "

⁴ M. Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*

All that the poet has said may be true and yet Nature may be anything but neutral in man's struggle between good and evil, truth and falsehood. It is perfectly true that our individual goodness or badness makes only occasionally any difference to our personal expectation of life. No insurance company makes any such inquiry into the virtues of its clients as it does into their physical constitution. It sounds their lungs and their hearts, and inquires if they are of a sedentary occupation or expect to be travelling in tropical regions. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. It does inquire if they are temperate, and it looks carefully for any trace of venereal poisoning. But it makes no inquiry as to truth, humility, courage, or justice.

Such considerations are supposed to close the whole question as to the moral neutrality of Nature to man's good or evil, and to make obsolete the whole Biblical idea of the relation between sin and death, righteousness and life. But we must, surely, go deeper. If we do so we shall discover a great assumption which conceals a fatal fallacy. All our popular current ways of looking at the matter take for granted the existence of a stable and ordered civil society, and the average lease of life that we have under such a condition. We never think of anything else, or provide for any other condition. The schedules of insurance companies, in Western lands at least, do not lay their account with possible cataclysms of the heaven or earth, earthquakes, typhoons, and sweeping pestilences. These are supposed to be beyond

normal probability. Yet if such shattering calamities happened which broke up the stable order of society, and resolved it into "a huddle of unrelated units," individuals striving desperately for dear life by the strength of their hands and the cunning of their brains, what would the expectation of life be then? We make a similar assumption about great moral apostasies, and this assumption conceals the basal realities, however convenient it may be in practice.

But instead of such paralysing calamities falling on society from without, suppose that by a sudden unseen apostasy the virtues were blotted out from men's hearts and nothing left but the animal instincts of self-assertion, hunger, and lust, society would be suddenly dissolved from within. The normal expectation of life would vanish, and the reign of death be swift and appalling. The world would reek with mortality as certainly as it does when there is an earthquake. The triumph of sin would mean the triumph of death. In such a case would it be any longer possible to maintain the ethical neutrality of Nature? At every turn she would be bringing home to our horrified senses the close and vital relation between the world within, the world of moral evil and good, and the world without, the world of suffering and death. That relation is under normal circumstances concealed from us because we take for granted a certain average of virtue and self-command in civilised society. We have had an appalling reminder of how thin is the conventional crust of "normal expectations" in the Great War. I do not know

how the life insurance companies met it! But I am certain that it shattered all their ordinary tables. It was the most colossal illustration in civilised history of sin working death.

Why then should we talk of the moral neutrality of Nature, or of Nature's being a closed system in which every physical event can be completely explained in terms of its purely physical antecedents, irrespective of our exertions or volitions? Could the physical death resulting from such a hypothetical moral apostasy as I have imagined be explained in terms of purely physical antecedents? Such very obvious considerations inevitably lead us to feel that both the current popular science and the ordinary version of idealism have somehow got out of touch with the realities of human experience and history. Nature must be less neutral in man's education than they imagine.

That type of idealism here, which, to use Dr Denney's phrase, regards Nature as simply the stage on which the moral life was transacted, has therefore at this point laid itself fatally open to the criticism of the naturalistic evolutionary school. These writers, following in the wake of Darwin, have denied the necessity of presupposing any *a priori* element in morality. Morality is fundamentally a racial character which men have developed in the struggle for existence. It is the product of natural selection as much as the beak and claw of the bird of prey. The peoples who have developed an adequate social structure and a moral character adequate to the sustaining of that social structure survive, because they are the strongest and fittest to survive.

The others do not, because having no adequate morality, they cannot maintain a vigorous social life. Moral duties are thus resolved into racial expediences. They have been driven home to man's mind by the tremendous discipline of events, the remorseless penalties which Nature has enforced on the peoples who refused to obey them, and the rewards which she has bestowed on those who practise them. These penalties falling upon anarchic, apathetic, and decadent peoples, and through them striking at the individuals of which they are composed, are of many kinds—privation, pestilence, famine, and enslavement. But all penalties are privations of life, and behind them is the supreme penalty of death. Such in substance is the naturalistic evolutionary theory of morality.

Its real value lies not in the naturalistic philosophy with which it has been associated, which is already passing into the twilight, but in the fresh contact with the facts, and in particular the new and closer study of the influence of the environment, the development of Anthropology, Sociology, and Comparative Ethics, which the rise of the evolutionary theory has brought about. I do not think that it is possible reasonably to deny that Natural Selection has played a great part in the development of human society and morality.

Least of all do I see why religious thought should find any difficulty in granting and welcoming this view, for it represents in a most drastic and unexpected way a return to the Biblical idea that sin works death, and that God educates the human race by the consequences of its own actions. The

testimony to the truth of this ancient principle is all the more impressive as nothing was further from the thoughts of those who first advanced and who have laboured at the demonstration of the evolutionary theory. They got their theory from a fresh and a more thorough study of the facts of Nature, primitive and savage man; and history.

When we come to ask the further question of whether the theory of Natural Selection taken alone can account for all the facts of the moral life, I think we must say that it fails conspicuously to do so. It has been present as a mighty and persistent factor in the development, but, when all is said, an external factor only. It has not created the moral consciousness of man. It has awakened, developed, and conserved it. On all this part of the debate the idealistic answer seems to me sufficient and conclusive. We cannot get out of Natural Selection and the evolutionary process above either the full moral imperative or the intrinsic values which are revealed in conscience. The evolutionary account of morality can explain only the protective husk under which the moral reason of man, which tells him the difference between right and wrong, grows up to maturity.

Dr Rashdall has put the distinction with humour as well as truth.

"Evolution," he says, "does not produce our geometrical ideas; they are only producible in a mind already potentially endowed with a capacity for apprehending them. And so with moral ideas. It would be as absurd to talk about 'the struggle for existence' and 'natural selection' as con-

stituting by themselves the 'origin' of our moral ideas, as it would be to treat the cane of the schoolmaster as being the 'origin' of our geometrical ideas, though there may be persons in whom these ideas would never have been developed without that agency. Moralities could have developed only in beings endowed with a capacity for Moral Reason ; and the truths of which our Moral Reason assures us are not less true because we recognise that certain biological facts and processes have been the condition of their discovery by this or that individual in this or that generation. Moral ideas are no more 'produced' or generated by physical events than any other of the categories of human thought. When this is recognised, there should be no hesitation in admitting that all the biological and psychological and social facts insisted on by the evolutionary moralists have really been conditions of moral development. They really do help to explain why such a virtue was developed at such a time and place, and another virtue in different circumstances, why this aspect of morality was emphasised in one kind of community and another in another, and so forth." ⁵

With this admission I entirely agree. There is no reason whatever why the most convinced Idealist should not only "admit," but should most cordially welcome the great service which the evolutionary moralists have done by bringing us into fresh contact with the facts of human life and history by calling attention to the great part which natural selection has played in awakening the

⁵ *Theory of Good and Evil*, vol. ii. pp. 99-100.

human spirit to the perception of the moral order of the Universe, as well as in developing the human mind in the knowledge of eternal truth.

But if this be so, the whole popular theory of the moral neutrality of nature must go by the board, and disappear submerged by the overwhelming advance of knowledge. To say that Natural Selection, broadly regarded, selects the more highly advanced types of society, and, broadly regarded, destroys the decadent and morally torpid peoples, to establish this as a general law, in spite of apparent exceptions, is to take a long step towards recognising not only that "Nature" is anything but "morally neutral," but that the world is under moral government, and that God educates men in truth and goodness not only through other men, but by the consequences of their own actions, in other words, by the rewards and retaliations of the natural environment.

Have the greatest intuitive and imaginative writers ever held anything else? Have they ever succumbed to the dreary fallacy that nature was wholly neutral in the great drama of the human spirit?

Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare—have they not all made us feel that the nature of things is remorselessly on the side of justice, mercy, and truth? That sin within works death and woe without, that there is a close inner relation between them, is part of the very substance of their thought, and has inspired the deepest notes of their music. All this is really unthinkable on the supposition of an absolutely neutral nature. Nature is far too

closely inwoven with the psychical life of man to admit of anything of the kind. The system of Nature and human life is to the synthetic genius of the poets one and not two dis severed though parallel parts, and they, like all the great Biblical writers, believe that the wages of sin is death. I do not say that the great humanists teach this in any narrow way in their tragedies. They recognise the sufferings of the innocent, and the apparent inequalities of justice in the mysterious whole of the world. But the undertone is more or less, I think, the same in all the greatest.

I do not claim, and for our immediate purpose it is not necessary to claim, that the evolutionary idealistic interpretation of man's ethical training is identical with the Biblical interpretation. It would be, indeed, surprising if it were. The evolutionists and the Biblical writers approach the facts of life from quite distinct points of view, and use different methods. The religious interpretation of life, of which we have the classical form in the Old and New Testaments, comes down, as it were, upon the world from the idea of God. It has reached the faith in His ethical nature and in His sovereign control of all things. It therefore seeks to explain the facts of life in terms of this growing faith. In the Old Testament and in the New we have a great labour of thought expended on this study of human life *sub specie æternitatis*. We see this interpretation growing out of its first crude form by honest facing of all the facts, and passing out at last into its fully developed form in the New Testament. It is what William James called

"the personal and romantic view of life," which recognises personality, individuality, the living relation of God with living human beings in mercy and in judgment and in Fatherly care. The modern scientific view begins with human beings, and proceeds like every science by way of the inductive methods. It makes abstraction from all particulars, and, dwelling on all common characteristics, it reaches out after general laws.

It is surely perfectly clear that the last thing we ought to expect is complete coincidence between the two accounts. To do so would be as absurd as to expect identity of detail in pictures of a mountain range taken from two totally different points of view. Yet, for all that, both may be absolutely true pictures. All that we have a right to look for is such general agreement as will enable us to see that the object pictured is the same.

Now I do not see how we can possibly maintain that the view of the "cosmic process" given us by Huxley, in which "Nature" is represented as fighting against man's higher life, can be brought into any harmony with the religious interpretation. It is radically inconsistent with the Divine Providence. Further, I do not see how the view which regards Nature as neutral to man's higher life can be brought into harmony with the Biblical view in its full Christian form. It is also radically inconsistent with the Christian ideas of providence and prayer. The inevitable result of trying to combine views so divergent must be to mutilate either the religious or the scientific interpretations or both.

But on the view which I have endeavoured to set forth in this chapter, there seems to me to be no such contradiction, but rather a deep and surprising agreement.

For on both views alike, Nature is anything but neutral, it takes sides definitely with those peoples who stake their lives on essential morality. Both views, also, alike recognise that the penalties of wrongdoing and false thinking and intellectual sloth are not necessarily inflicted on the wrongdoer or false thinker himself, but often, though not always, on the community to which he belongs. It matters not that the scientific view ascribes this to the organic character of society, or to "solidarity," and the religious view speaks of vicarious suffering, for in principle the two ideas are the same.

I believe, therefore, that that appalling contradiction which Mill, Huxley, and Russell found to exist between the alien cosmic order which they discerned with their senses and understanding, and the world of moral values of which they were inwardly aware, has just as little existence as that supposed neutrality and self-sufficiency of Nature which more idealistic thought teaches; and that, on the contrary, we have, with all remaining difficulties, good reason to believe, as Christian thought has always believed, that Nature is dependent upon God, is purposive throughout towards His spiritual ends, and that it is plastic in His hands for the guidance and discipline of free human spirits. I admit that what we have is faith rather than demonstration, that there are unsolved problems in the disharmonies of Nature and the

tragedies of human life, and that our knowledge of the stupendous whole is exceedingly limited. Yet we know enough to be morally certain that we hold the clue to the labyrinth in the ideal ends of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, in the knowledge and pursuit of which and of Him in whom they are One "standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom," and that great Nature, far from being hostile or neutral to these ideal ends, is in the long run decisively on their side.

Let us now draw together the threads of our argument, and consider the bearing of its results on the question of our Lord's miracles.

If that argument has been sound, the positive evils which man endures from the great system of Nature are contingent either upon his departure from true and worthy ways of thinking and living, or his failure to attain them. They are all in their Divine intention revelatory of the true order, and therefore educative. And inasmuch as God wills this perfection for all His children, they are contingent upon a condition of man's heart and mind which is not in conformity with God's purpose for him. They are not parts of the Divine and eternal order at all. They are, on any thoroughgoing Theistic view of the world, signs that man has not as yet attained that depth and width of knowledge, and sufficient purity and loyalty of heart as son of God and brother of men in the great human family or Kingdom of God, which he is meant to attain. All this seems to me to follow quite naturally and inevitably from the faith that "the world is not a vale of tears, but

a place of soul-making." That again follows inevitably from the Fatherhood of God as revealed by Jesus Christ. But if this fundamental view of the spiritual ground, nature, and purpose of the world be true, and if the natural evils of life are signs that man has not yet attained full spiritual maturity, then it would seem to follow, that if Jesus of Nazareth were the true Son of God, the ideal human being whom they depict Him to have been, it was fitting that He should do just the kind of works that they declare Him to have done, and show Himself uniquely master of those natural evils.

And on the other hand, if He did what He is reported to have done, He has definitely verified that general view of the world as created by God, as directed by His will towards the realisation of His Kingdom, and as meantime plastic in His Hands for the everyday protection and discipline of His children, in which Jesus Himself demonstrably lived and moved and had His being.

CHAPTER VI

MODERN INSTANCES AND SPECULATIONS

WE have nearly worked our way through to the point where we may claim to have established a case for using the miracles of Jesus Christ to interrogate the universe ; for asking what light they have to throw upon the courses of nature and history, the character and purpose of God, the place and power of prayer and the ultimate destiny of man.

But it may be said that the argument has been vitiated by one great omission. It implies that the power of Christ over Nature and, in particular, over the destroying and mortal powers of Nature inhere in His perfect humanity through which the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, can work deeds of creative life and blessing in the lives of men. But if it be so, we should surely expect to find in His followers some trace at least of that supernatural power, however faintly and imperfectly it may manifest itself. Now it is said, it is matter of plain fact that these lives manifest nothing of the kind. They do show, in general, some signs of inward regenerating power, and, sometimes, changes of character so radical that the best language for describing them is that of new birth. But there is nothing at all of the same kind

in the outward life, nothing physical corresponding to the spiritual deliverances of which religious biography is full. Do we, indeed, expect to return to the age of miracles? This is, indeed, the practical crux of the whole argument.

First of all in reply to the last question, I would say that it depends entirely on what is meant by "miracles." As the word is usually employed, it would mean, Do we expect that the time is at hand when men will do the things that Jesus did? I would say, "Assuredly, no." The whole argument implies that these extraordinary achievements of prayer were due to His extraordinary spiritual personality which was so entirely at one with the will of the Father that the Father was able to do extraordinary deeds of blessing, through Him. The difference between His achievements and the greatest of other men's achievements is a measure of the spiritual difference between Him and them. It is like the difference between Shakespeare and some modern playwright.

But if by "miracle" we mean something inexplicable in terms of physical Nature, I would say, "Assuredly, yes." In this sense every free human action, as Lord Kelvin once said, is a miracle, for it cannot be accounted for in terms of its merely physical antecedents. As we have seen, the power of the sciences to explain all individuality and the physical actions that result from individuality is far less than men used to believe. In this sense, too, every answered prayer is a miracle. I believe that such miracles are happening every day of our lives, and that no earnest life that lives by prayer

is so poor as to be without them. I do not see any reason whatever to discredit the many instances that can be given to prove that God hears and answers prayer for outward as well as inward blessings and enhancements of life, recovery from sickness, delivery from danger and famine. I do not believe that our Lord put the prayer for daily bread in His prayer without meaning something by it.

In this sense, then, I certainly believe that we are one and all meant to work miracles, and that they are occurring all around us only they are not recognised as such.

But, further, it has to be said that to a great extent modern men and women have ceased to ask for and expect them, largely owing to sophistications and perplexities in the region of thought. In current experience they are most commonly to be found on the mission field remote from the influence of the Time Spirit, in the lives of devout men and women who live apart from the great intellectual currents, or in communities like the Friends who are nurtured in a tradition of "signs and wonders" in the life of the Spirit.

I do not believe that this limitation of faith in prayer is likely to be anything but a passing phase in the life of true Christendom. It is due in part to that intellectual sophistication of which I have spoken, and in part to that weakening of the idea of God which is the radical spiritual malady of our time and is the real cause of that peculiar flatness and deadness of the life of the Church, of which so many with greater or less justice complain.

It is surely too much that an age like ours should take its own life and achievement as the normal standard, and rule out of the New Testament as myth, legend and overbelief, all for which it can find no strict analogy in the life of to-day. The underlying assumption is that our own spiritual climate is that which is normal for the human race, an odd self-complacency for an age the natural working out of whose ideals and methods has produced so enormous a conflagration as the world war. Nearly all the deepest judges of our age tell us that it has been an age in which the higher forces of the Spirit are running low.

Can we pass beyond that general answer that we who believe in God know that prayer is answered?

Is there anything in the progress of human knowledge that brings the signs of Jesus more within the range of what is believable by modern men? Or are we in that respect just in the same position as were the men and women of fifty years ago? I have already pointed out that there has been a very great though only half-realised or acknowledged change here in the general position of the modernist school which indicates quite plainly that new facts of that kind have come to light. In the days of Strauss and Renan nearly all the miracles of Jesus were regarded as either mythical or legendary. To-day one great exception is almost invariably made. The healing miracles are in substance admitted to be probably true history. That is a very remarkable fact. There cannot be the least doubt as to the cause of this change. It is due to

nothing less than the growing conviction that there is clear and convincing evidence that there is undeniable reality in some at least of the innumerable stories of cures of bodily disease by spiritual means which have been recorded from a great variety of sources within the last eighty years.

At first these stories came purely from religious sources. The Roman Church was early¹ in the field with the "miracles" of Lourdes, but as the nineteenth century went on Protestantism began to develop several distinct schools of spiritual healing, that of Pastor Blumhardt at Badboll, which exerted a marked influence on German opinion, certain more obscure movements in England, and finally the immense outgrowth of Christian Science in the United States.

But the deepest and widest impression on the educated mind was made when science took the matter up and the growing interest in and understanding of the phenomena of hypnotism led to the rise of psycho-therapeutics. The steady accumulation of facts in this domain at last forced the recognition that the mind was more concerned both in the production and in the healing of disease than the older medical science had been prepared to recognise, and than the old hard and fast philosophical dualism of conscious mind and unconscious body could admit. Frederick Myers's volumes on *Human Personality* first brought the idea of the subliminal region within the ken of

¹ Of course the Roman Church has never abandoned the claim that miracles were wrought by the saints and at certain holy places. But Lourdes is her most conspicuous modern instance.

the English-speaking public, and gave the ordinary man a new pigeon-hole in which he could now receive and store the strange and hitherto "occult" facts which were too well attested for him to deny. Next came the schools of Freud and Jung, and then came the war and its tragic multitudes of nerve-shattered men with maladies with which the older types of medical science, however magnificently successful they were in their own regions, proved utterly unable to cope, while the newer methods of psycho-therapeutics often proved completely successful.

I once, after the close of the war, asked one of the most distinguished authorities on these methods what difference it had made to him and his fellow practitioners. "Just this," he said, "that at the beginning of the war we found it impossible to get a chance in the field, and that now we cannot get demobilised."

To-day it is generally, I think, conceded by most open-minded people that many diseases even of the body can be successfully attacked from within through the mind, as well as from without through the body.

How far that attack may be successfully made there is no general agreement, even among experts in psycho-therapeutic treatment. One of these told the writer that there were certain forms of physical disease that he had no hope that with his methods he could ever cure, while another,² equally distinguished, was positive that ideally

² Both of these men were fully qualified medical practitioners, and distinguished men of science.

every form of disease could be successfully treated by such methods, "though," he added, "it will take a good while to do it. I do not expect that in twenty-five years from now we shall be treating cancer by suggestion, but by a new serum." Orthodox medical science, while admitting that there is no tissue of the human body that may not be influenced by spirit, draws the line between functional and organic disease. Bolder spirits in the other camp argue that this distinction in kind is arbitrary and depends simply and solely on the fact that our microscopes are as yet not of sufficient power to reveal organic deterioration in all functionally disordered tissues, and so to make the distinction simply one of degree.

All genuinely religious faith in spiritual healing, of course, while it admits the distinction, denies its relevance. "With God all things are possible." Meantime facts accumulate. Each one interested must examine the evidence for himself as he may meet with it in his own experience or study it in the voluminous but somewhat loosely attested reports in the periodical publications of Christian Science, or the more carefully drawn up volumes and bulletins which originate at Lourdes. I confess that unless one possesses a comfortable *a priori* theory which enables one satisfactorily to decide as to what is or is not true beforehand, it is extremely difficult to escape from the conclusion that diseases usually called organic sometimes yield to these methods as certainly as many that are called functional. I would recommend to any one who doubts this a careful study of one or more of the Lourdes volumes

to which I have referred above, which always give the previous medical diagnosis and which certify the results. It is easy to check these by reading the hostile literature, which is also voluminous. As a matter of fact, so far as mere scientific evidence goes some of these "miracles" are better attested than some in the Gospels themselves.

Few people who have not examined the evidence which is now available on the whole matter have any idea of the change in the whole outlook on the possibilities of the powers of the mind over the body which the last twenty-five years have effected.

I shall content myself however with two quotations on the matter from Professor Macdougall's well-known volume on *Body and Mind*.

"It has been shown that under certain conditions (especially in the hypnotic and post-hypnotic states) the mind may exert an influence over the organic processes of the body far greater than any that had been generally recognised by physiologists. Especially noteworthy are the production of blisters, erythemata and ecchymoses of the skin (the so-called stigmata³) in positions and of definite shapes determined by verbal suggestions, and the rapid healing of wounds or burns with almost complete suppression of inflammation; and with these may be put the complete suppression or prevention of pain, even pain of such severity as normally accompanies a major surgical operation."⁴

Professor Macdougall brings his massive survey of the entire field of the relations between mind and body to a conclusion in a chapter from which the

³ Sc. of St Francis and others.

⁴ P. 351.

following carefully guarded sentence is taken. It seems to me to represent the real state of the question on the particular point under immediate discussion. "Successful therapeutic suggestions and others that effect definite tissue changes are especially significant in the present connexion; for in all such cases we have definite evidence of control of bodily processes which, though unconsciously effected, must be regarded as psychical. Of the limits of this power of mental control over the organic processes of the body we are altogether ignorant, and new evidence, much of it ill reported, and therefore valueless, but much of it above suspicion, repeatedly warns us against setting up any arbitrary limit to what may be effected in this way." ⁵

It is impossible to study all this immensely varied mass of evidence coming from all the different schools of spiritual and mental healing and psychotherapeutics without being impressed by its superficial diversity and its fundamental agreement as to method. There is the sharpest antagonism between the schools of practitioners. To the devout Roman Catholic the whole claim of Protestant faith-healers and Christian Scientists is anathema, and there is chronic warfare also between him and the physicians of the Salpêtrière and the school of Nancy. To the true Christian Scientist there is only one scientific method of healing, and that is his own; hypnotism in particular is of the pit. To the psycho-therapist, Christian Scientists and faith-healers are blundering fanatics or charlatans. Yet there is one

⁵ Pp. 374-5.

fundamental thing that they all alike call for and that one thing is Faith. They one and all ask for a belief in the healer or the suggestion or the ultimate nature of things so full that it shall generate in the imagination the confident expectation that the thing sought for will be given, or, better still, that it has already been given, and that all that is needed is to realise it. In other words, they ask for a kind of faith and hope. That this is so any one can verify for himself by studying the copious literature of all these movements and schools. This agreement seems to me of extraordinary significance, and taken in connection with what was said at the beginning of this chapter about those answers to prayers "of which many can testify," it disposes completely of the objection that there is nothing in human nature and experience as we know them to-day which would warrant us in believing that if we were like Christ we might in some measure share His powers over the mortal forces of Nature. Something has happened in the world of the last fifty years, the discovery of latent potentialities in human nature, which throws new light on this ancient controversy, something which was not fully before the mind of either the earlier Traditionalist or Modernist when they framed their views of the miracles of Jesus.

Many good people to-day think that it lowers the greatness of the miracles of Jesus to seek to bring them into any kind of comparison with Lourdes and Christian Science and Spiritual Healing and Psychotherapeutics. They are thus at the opposite pole from those referred to above, whose main difficulty

with the miracles of Jesus is that there is nothing in human experience that is in the least analogous with them, nothing that helps us to believe that even a Personality unique in greatness and goodness can have any greater influence for good on the world of Nature than the most commonplace personality and the meanest character. I confess that I do not share the difficulty of the former class. There is a profound difference between the deeds of Jesus taken as a whole and the miracles of Lourdes and Nancy, but so far as physical results go it is a difference of degree rather than of kind.

I would plead for a more sympathetic outlook on all these strange phenomena of spiritual and mental healing. If they can be finally established as true facts, the result would be greatly to enrich human life and widen and deepen our whole view of the world. They show that even in this world spiritual and mental forces can control for good the lower forces, and that a bold and generous faith in the ultimate nature of things works for physical, as we know that it does for mental and spiritual, soundness and health. If these facts can be established and set beyond all doubt, I cannot but think it would be a good day for the human race. The world would be proved to be a richer and finer place for humanity to dwell in, more sympathetic and responsive to human need. That these phenomena have been often exploited by fanatics and charlatans is nothing to the point. There is no field of human science that in its earlier stages has not been so exploited. Did not astronomy grow out of astrology, and chemistry from the quest

for the philosopher's stone? The facts and their attestation or disproof are what we have to fix our thoughts upon, and if, as seems now indisputable, disease can be dispelled or even alleviated from the spiritual side by means of ordinary human beings to-day, that has a very momentous and definite bearing upon the historical character of the healing miracles of the Gospels, which it is mere obscurantism to ignore.

It may be granted by others that while all this may be true of what is known as spiritual healing, it is not true of the cures wrought by suggestion under hypnosis or of psycho-therapeutics; that these have nothing whatever in common with the miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels, and that therefore they cannot be brought into the question at all. It is quite true that these have often nothing distinctively religious about them, and often seem almost as mechanical as cures wrought by the action of a drug. Waiving, for the moment, the point to which I have already referred, that the patient must have some measure of faith in the healer and his method and in the suggestion given him, I would point out that every one of the miracles of the Gospels must have had a psychological side. Assuming the truth of the New Testament view that all our Lord's deeds of healing were wrought by the Spirit of God, there must have been some point at which that Heavenly Life made contact with and influenced the human organism, and set in operation the psychophysical processes of renewal. Psycho-therapeutics has explored this region and shown

that it is still open to the control of the mind.⁶

As has been said, the impression made upon modern thought by the phenomena of which I have spoken has been sufficiently great to make most if not all modern writers on the life of Jesus admit in general terms the historical credibility of His healing miracles. This change is of itself sufficient to dispose of the difficulty stated at the beginning of this chapter. But here the line is usually drawn. The nature miracles, as they are called, the narratives of the stilling of the storm and the feeding of the multitudes, are still regarded as incredible and, therefore, legendary. The reason is obvious. Modern experience has given us something analogous to the healing miracles. But to these there is believed to be no parallel. They are "signs" wrought, not upon responsive human bodies, but directly on the great frame of Nature herself, and one of them at least seems to be a miracle not of influence and direction of natural forces, but of actual creation. The distinction is held to be so great as to make such miracles unbelievable by modern men and women. Many even of those who fully accept the uniqueness of Christ and the reality of His healing miracles are willing to give up these nature miracles as inconsistent with the scientific outlook and also as

⁶ I leave meantime undiscussed the question of what it is that in the last resort heals in psycho-therapeutic treatment, whether, as is commonly said, it is the suggestion that heals, or whether it simply puts the mind and the psycho-physical mechanisms in such a relation to the cosmos that healing influences can enter.

contributing little or nothing to the Christian interpretation of life. But is it indeed so? With reference to the former point there does not appear to me to be any difference in principle between these nature miracles and the healing miracles. Neither group can really be brought within the "closed system" of physical Nature. While, like the others, the nature miracles elude physical science, they may well belong to history, for once more we have to remember the unique personality of Jesus.

It is quite true that a sign wrought upon the vast frame of Nature, as it were directly, seems much greater, more out of the common, than one wrought upon the human body. The human body seems something intermediate between nature and spirit. It seems to be a piece of nature half spiritualised already, and therefore more readily open to spiritual influences. But we must think clearly and consecutively. The consistent scientific naturalism with which we have mainly to do cannot admit that the body is open to spiritual influences. Body and spirit are parallel processes, lines that never meet, and therefore the body is just as sealed to spiritual influences as are the winds and the waters. The whole of physical Nature is one closed system under the complete sway of material causation throughout, or no part of it is. But if we depart, as we have seen reason to depart, from this view, if we have made up our minds that it is an incomplete view of Nature, then it no longer stands in the way of even the "nature miracles" of Jesus.

Nothing can be more futile when great issues are before us which demand coherent thought, than to grant the possibility of small miracles and to hold to the impossibility of great. Consistent religious thought finds it difficult to treat such reasoning seriously. It is like pleading in defence of a murder that the person murdered was only a child. The reply of the law is that it was murder all the same.

But when we have thus cleared the ground of the strictly scientific and relevant difficulty, and when the argument is with those who no longer stand by the "closed system" conception of nature, as anything but a convenient method and calculus of thought, with those who have a freer and more spiritual view of the universe, Theistic in its bases, with men who admit that the body is the meeting-ground of Nature and Spirit and that from the spiritual side influences directing, moulding and renewing do pass over into the physical, we may readily admit that there is some difference between the healing and the nature miracles. There is a greater difficulty for the imagination in believing that Christ said to the storm and the waves, "Peace be still!" and that they obeyed Him, than that He said, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk!" and that the paralytic "arose and followed Him." We think of the miracles of healing as wrought directly by Jesus on men's bodies through their minds, but we see no such mental bridge between Christ and the storm. The difficulty suggests a deepening of all our thought about healing and nature miracles alike. Are they not all alike wrought through the

Divine mind by prayer? For anyone who believes in the living God in whom nature has its origin and who controls its course is there really any fundamental difficulty that is not present in the other case? I do not think so. In the one case as in the other it is really God who heals the body and controls the storm, and it is in His name that Jesus utters His commands.

But it may be said, are the nature miracles of any real spiritual importance? On the view which I have been endeavouring to set forth in this volume, as that of the Gospels themselves, they certainly are. When all is said, physical disease is only one of the multitude of natural ills to which man is at present subject—plague, hunger, and the wild forces of Nature, symbolised in the sea and the storm. The nature miracles are indications that subjection to none of these things is part of God's unconditional will for man. They have no place in the Kingdom of God. Man's present subjection to them and the havoc and sorrow that they cause in human life is due to his imperfection, ignorance, and sin. They are therefore part of his discipline in character and in knowledge, in faith and in prayer. But we have no reason to believe that permanent subjection to them is part of the unchangeable, unconditional will of God for men. It is not impious for men to fight against famine, or foolish for men to pray for deliverance from the storm. It is indeed their duty to do both, just as it is their duty to strive and pray against the inroads of disease.

Has real piety of the Biblical type ever thought

anything else, or shrunk from the appeal to God to control even the winds and the waters and deliver those "in peril on the sea"? These prayers are certainly for something more than that those in such peril may be kept calm and strong and morally intact amid their dangers. They should include that, but they are for real objective deliverance, and that, as we have seen, necessarily implies something over and above the "closed system" of nature, something in principle, therefore, "miraculous" in the broader meaning of the term, in other words a nature miracle.

In truth the real difficulty which many feel about the nature miracles of Jesus has precisely the same root as that difficulty which many feel about petitionary prayer for anything save inward spiritual help and guidance. We have here the old obsession about the "closed system" of physical nature showing itself once more. That "closed system" is assumed to be the whole of Nature, and is then identified with the immovable decree of God. From the point of view of the argument of this book the nature miracles of Jesus are needed to complete the idea embodied in the healing miracles. They are meant to embody the ideal will of God and the ideal destiny of man in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord's resurrection is the crowning manifestation of that victory over all the mortal and tragic powers of the world. It unites the two groups of His signs of which I have spoken. On the one hand it may be classed with the healing group, for all disease is a kind of dying. On the other, a human body from which

life has departed seems simply part of the inorganic world,

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees.

It is as much part of the dead material world as the winds and waters of the Galilean lake. It is difficult to see, if we reject the nature miracles on principle, how we can continue to maintain a reasonable faith in the complete reality of the resurrection. Yet a Christianity without a true resurrection is bereft, as I have tried to show, of something that lies near the very springs of its genius. Modernist attempts to show that the first Christians did not believe in anything but a spiritual resurrection of Jesus, an escape to God from the trammels of the body, come dangerously near to special pleading. It can be quite conclusively shown, for instance, that the idea of the body as the prison of the soul is not Hebrew at all but Greek. It can be shown also, quite conclusively, that the whole structure of Hebrew and Jewish thought compelled men to hold that Christ's premature death upon the Cross demanded a full and complete resurrection, and an empty tomb, if His disciples were to recover their faith in Him as the victorious Messiah and the "prince of life" they believed Him to be. Such considerations compel us to take St Paul's words⁷ in their natural way and at their full value. "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 3 and 4.

to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

It has been argued that St Paul here is thinking only of a spiritual resurrection of Jesus and that it is significant that he makes no mention of the empty tomb. I have already in another connection⁸ dealt with this argument, but something falls to be added. Dr Denney's reply to this ingenuity is, I think, final. "The mention of the burial is important in this connection as defining what is meant by the rising—we see from it that it would have conveyed no meaning to Paul or any member of the original Christian circle to say that it was the spirit of Christ which rose to new life, or that He rose again in the faith of His devoted followers, who could not bear the thought that for Him death should end all. The rising is relative to the grave and the burial, and if we cannot speak of a bodily resurrection we should not speak of a resurrection at all."⁹

It is, as has already been pointed out, difficult to see how anyone who has really studied St Paul's whole thought on the relation between sin and death, on the body and the spirit, and finally on the ultimate transformation of the body, can persuade himself that St Paul could possibly have believed in any theory of the Lord's resurrection which could dispense with the empty tomb. We are not at the moment concerned with the truth or error of these Pauline ideas, but simply with the kind of resurrection in which he believed. It is

⁸ Pp. 44-45.

⁹ *Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 113.

quite clear from the whole context of his thought, as well as from his own words, that at the centre of his faith lay the full Easter message, and that in this he was at one with the whole New Testament community. This full resurrection faith is the very root of the New Testament optimism. There is no more characteristic expression of it than the opening of the first Epistle of Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

There was something more here than even that which was the central and supreme thing in the New Testament consciousness—the sense that the power of sin was broken. There was the sense that the power of sorrow and tragedy was broken too, that in the resurrection the Kingdom of Heaven had been manifested to men. In a word the resurrection was the same kind of thing in a supreme and perfect way that the earlier signs of the Lord had been, the visualising of the eternal life, the first-fruits of the Spirit, the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth in which sin and sorrow would pass away and death be no more. The first Christians believed that they were living in the dawn of a new creation. The sun had risen behind them and was transfiguring earth and sky and sea with a light which would one day irradiate the whole universe. That sun was God in Christ, the risen Christ "who had abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Can we translate that idea of the resurrection

into terms of modern thought, so that we shall not miss its essence, as I cannot but think that even the well-intended mediating theories do?

It is clear that St Paul held neither these nor the simple reanimation view. He obviously believed that a transfiguring change had passed over the body of the Lord. We have here something that goes quite beyond all our experience. We admit this of all the signs of Jesus, and it is truest of all of His final victory over death. But while we freely admit this, it is permissible to approach the mystery along the lines of analogy with what we do know. If we follow the lines of organic evolution up to man, and from the most primitive men of whom we have traces up to the highest men we know, we see the bodily elements growing more and more capable of becoming instruments of Spirit, the wonderful tool of the body becoming more and more adequate for the uses of the intelligence, the imagination, and the soul. What is the difference between the monkey's paw and the artist's hand? Is there not more here than the anatomist and the physiologist can tell us, something that only comes into view when we ask as to the end? Is not the artist's hand a better expression and instrument of the spirit? Are we to suppose that the long process of the subordination of matter to spirit ends with the human body as we know it, or must there not be something more perfect still in the way of bodily organisation, a more spiritual and lasting type of body in touch with a finer and larger environment?

Such an idea sixty years ago would have been treated as simply a forlorn and "devout imagination" by the dominant science and philosophy. But to-day there come new voices from science. As regards higher forms of living organism which may transcend mortality, let us hear Bergson as he contemplates the giant stream of life pouring from the unknown past to the unknown future: "As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organised beings from the humblest to the highest, from the first origin of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand upon the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army, galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge, able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death."¹⁰

Let us hear another living philosophic thinker on the possibilities of the human spirit: "We need not fear that this mechanism (*i.e.* of the material world) will be found too rigid and mechanical, that in the ripeness of time it will put an absolute limit upon spiritual evolution. The time may come when Matter will no longer offer any obstacle to our wishes, and when, in sober truth, Man will

¹⁰ *Creative Evolution*, Eng. tr., pp. 285, 286.

precipitate a mountain into the sea. Or can it be that a completer harmony of the human with the Divine Will can anticipate the course of social evolution, and give to saints and sages a power over Matter which transcends that of ordinary men, and even now enables their faith to move mountains? May not their power over Matter already rise to the level to be attained in far-distant ages, just as their intellectual and moral development towers above that of the societies in which they dwell? It is enough for a philosopher to assert that there is nothing inherently absurd in the supposition, and that a will completely synonymous with the Divine Will would needs have a complete control of the Material."¹¹

And as regards the transformation of something much greater than the body, the physical universe, into what may be the environment of that transformed body, let us hear Professor Whitehead: "The universe shows us two aspects: on one side it is physically wasting, on the other it is spiritually ascending. It is thus passing with a slowness, inconceivable in our measure of time, to new creative conditions, amid which the physical world, as we at present know it, will be represented by a ripple, barely to be distinguished from non-entity."¹²

However we may speculate, the power of the resurrection faith in the first Christian age lay in this, that it was a complete victory over death and

¹¹ *Riddles of the Sphinx*, 2nd Edition, pp. 304-5, by F. C. S. Schiller.

¹² *Religion in the Making*, p. 160.

therefore contained in itself the promise and the potency of a like victory for all mankind. "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

The last word then of the Gospel is not one of final submission to nature's last word, death, but of rebellion against it and of victory over it by the power of the Spirit.

CHAPTER VII

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES

It is clear that the general view of the miracles of the Gospels taken in this volume, as being Divine answers to the prayers of Jesus, and as being conditioned not upon His metaphysical Deity, but upon the faith, hope, and love that were in Him, carries with it certain far-reaching consequences as to the range and power of ideal prayer which must gravely affect not only our conceptions of God and the world, but which must influence deeply the practice of our devotional life. Many, I believe, will feel that the most serious difficulties lie in this region.

For one thing, it is plain that the view implies that our prayers should not be confined to purely "spiritual" matters, but should range over the whole field both of our inward and our outward lives and the lives, also, of others.

Heiler, in his remarkable book on prayer, has distinguished three types of spiritual life, the mystical, the philosophical, and the prophetic. "Mysticism must, if it remain true to itself, reject the naïve asking for external good things, and everything not directed towards (communion with) God Himself, as unworthy. The earthly is, indeed, a deceptive show without true being, something

which ought not to be, a thing without value and therefore a peril for salvation and a hindrance to union with God. The affections and wishes which assert themselves must not be freely spoken out in prayer, but must be subdued, chained, and slain. The asceticism, which gradually brings to death the sensuality which feeds the emotional life of the soul, is the foundation of pure mysticism." Heiler points out, further, that philosophic and rationalist thought is also hostile to petition for earthly good and tends to reduce prayer to simple meditation. Over against these types he sets the prophetic conception of prayer which demands, not the ascetic annihilation of natural human desires and necessities, but the free opening of the whole world of human need to the Father and the simple and honest expression of these in our prayers to Him in the faith and expectation that they will be answered, not only in the spiritual, but in the whole life of man. He gives many citations from the great personalities of the Reformation and of the Evangelical faith, Luther, Calvin, Rothe, Herrmann, and others to illustrate this conception of the range and power of prayer; and sums up his review by saying, "Mysticism and the ethical philosophy found prayer for temporal good things to be irreligious and sinful. Prophetic religion, it is true, puts moral and religious values at the heart of prayer, but it has room also for the childlike and primitive prayer for life and food, for rain and sunshine."¹

¹ *Das Gebet*, 5. Auflage, pp. 369-372. He quotes Ménégoz as saying that Kant and Hegel, Strauss and Robertson, Schleier-

The view of the Gospel teaching which has been taken in this volume emphasises this "prophetic" conception in the strongest way. The "mystical" view of prayer, indeed, can only maintain its ground either by defending the portent theory of the miracles of Jesus, or by allying itself with the modernist conception of Nature, both of which views we have seen reason to consider unsound. Neither the mystical nor the philosophical exclusion of petitionary prayer for objective good has any root in Scripture, and indeed is subtly out of harmony with the Christian idea of God. Its open or tacit acceptance by many to-day is in no way due to a mystical aloofness from the temporal needs of man. There is nothing ascetic about it. It is due, on the intellectual side, simply to our modern intimidation by the "closed system" idea of nature, and, on the practical, by the disappointment of prayer for such blessings and deliverances. This capitulation disguises itself too often under the appearance of religious submission to what is assumed to be a Divinely ordered "course of events," which is supposed to be identical with the direct appointment of the Divine Providence. In reality that "course of events" is only the "closed system" under another name. It is, as a matter of fact, often due mainly to man's indolence, removable ignorance, lust or pride, and is against the pure and loving will of God.

Prayer of the New Testament type, if it sees anything happening, or about to happen, thatmacher and Ritschl have all yielded in theory to the old rationalistic metaphysics, and cramped the true liberty of prayer.

is contrary to the Divine Nature as revealed in Jesus Christ, will have no hesitation in asking God to intervene, and, subject to His greater knowledge, in expecting an answer. It will range over the whole sphere of human life, and in all simplicity will ask the Father for all that it needs, in the belief that its petitions make a profound difference to the course of events and to the lives of others. Praying and working are really meant to go together and to supplement each other and assist each other. We have no right to work for anything for which we cannot pray, and we have no right to pray for anything for which we may not work, if our work can do anything to secure its attainment. It may be that our prayers are not heard because God wishes us also to work. It may be that our mere work fails because God wishes us also to pray. In most cases He wills both praying and working.

For what is petitionary prayer but asking God to come to our aid when we are at His work? Countless outward events either help or hinder us in that work. What can be more fatal than to wall off the world of outward events, to forbid prayer within that region, and to confine its influence to the realm of the soul? It is utterly illogical to make this distinction now that we know that psychology has its laws as well as physical nature. Moreover, it, at one sweep, secularises the whole world of outward events for us, when we are really meant to spiritualise every natural and human need, every fact that concerns us, by taking it into the pure atmosphere of prayer, and having it thus associated with the Father in our most inward life.

Petitionary prayer in the fullest sense of the term is every whit as necessary to the full spiritual life as confession and thanksgiving. They are all true and necessary parts of real communion with God.

It is utterly futile, moreover, to expect any sincere man to ask God for any greatly desired good for the sake of praying himself into peace of mind and willingness to do without it. If he cannot rationally expect an answer, he should not go through the farce of praying for it! The assurance may often come to such a man in such prayers that he is in error in asking for some definite good thing, but that, as it were, is a by-product of the prayer. If he come to believe that such by-products are the only results of prayer, a sincere man will stop praying and so he will get neither direct nor indirect results.

I have already pointed out how extraordinarily strong is Christ's language about the power of petitionary prayer. This remains undeniable whether we accept the historicity of His miracles or not. Why do so many modern commentators show themselves nervous and embarrassed when dealing with them? For precisely the same reasons as those for which men reject the historicity of the miracles. There is something in the very intellectual climate of our time that is inimical to such sayings and deeds. I have endeavoured to show what these intellectual hindrances are, but we are concerned here mainly with practical difficulties, and that these are very real I should never think of denying. The truth is that most men and women in our day know little of obvious and strik-

ing answers to prayer, any more than they know of miracles.

I think not a few would state their difficulty here in some such terms as these—"Granted that all you have said is true, that the intellectual difficulties to-day are no longer very substantial, and that Jesus Christ had incomparably more faith in the power of prayer than we moderns have,—what do you make of the broad fact that we, all of us, or most of us, have repeatedly had our most earnest prayers apparently refused? We have prayed for the preservation of our young friends from death in battle, and we have lost them; for the recovery of others from illness, and they have died; for success in honest toil for lawful ends, and we have failed; for the opening of the iron doors of circumstance which kept us from attaining our fullest usefulness, and we have been disappointed. What do you make of unanswered prayer?" It is because of this practical difficulty that many have grasped at the idea of a region in which, by its very nature, prayer has, by the appointment of God, no right of way. This is a vain anodyne. Let us test the method. The sharpest trials of faith are those prayers for the spiritual good of ourselves and others that seem unanswered. What are we to make of the apparent failures of intercessory prayer? Why is the spiritual awakening of a community so long delayed, why are there so few conversions of a striking kind? Are we to fall back here again on psychological laws and necessities, indicating that this is another region into which the power of prayer must not intrude? So the scope of prayer

is allowed to contract until nothing is left but the narrow sphere of individual, spiritual need. But, one asks, How long will that road remain open? We may rest assured that here, too, the shadow of necessity and law will speedily enter, and that all petitionary prayer will be reduced to auto-suggestion. This whole way of reasoning seems to me radically wrong, and is bound in the end to lead to the disintegration of living, personal religion.

But the practical difficulty remains. What are we to make of it? I would say, first of all, that the difficulty is gravely overstated. There are very many who will bear witness that in their own experience prayer has been answered, and that that answer has by no means been confined to the inner region of the soul, but has been plain and clear in the outward world of events as well. Outward difficulties of circumstances have been surprisingly and inexplicably removed, and deliverances from danger have been experienced, of which the only reasonable explanation that can be given is that they were in answer to prayer. Now be it remembered that if so much as one such answer has ever been actually given, the whole theory of a closed course of events, within which prayer is of no avail, must be abandoned. If the theory gives comfort to some, it is at the expense of declaring that the whole immensely wide and varied story of Divine answers to human prayers, from New Testament days right down through all the Christian ages to our own time, has been one prolonged and persistent hallucination. And this, for any one who knows the literature and history,

and has any sympathy with it, is unbelievable. What the history does unmistakably show is that striking answers to prayer in the outward world of events, as well as in the question of spiritual influence upon others, are usually associated with individual men and women of a certain spiritual type characterised by a vivid experience of the Divine presence, and a simple trust in the goodness, the power, and the liberty of God; in other words, by a very strong and simple faith. Outwardly they are often at opposite poles. Imagine St Francis, St Catherine of Sienna, Luther, Fox, Wesley, and George Müller gathered in one room together, and the antagonisms and the shocks that they would impart to each other until they began to confer on the power of prayer, and the unanimity with which on that point they would confront the doubter! There are very many obscure and humble men and women who could bear a like testimony, many of them living among us to-day. With all respect to Modernism of the type we are here thinking of, its theory is too devastatingly simple to account for the complexity of the facts.

But supposing we feel this, and grant that some prayers for outward good, and that some prayers of intercession have been answered, why have so many been apparently unanswered? The ordinary answer to this is simply to confess that we do not know, but that for all that we trust God and believe in the power of prayer. That is a sound and true temper of spirit, and at no stage of knowledge of Divine things can we dispense with it. "God is great and knoweth all things." We know

but "the outskirts of His ways." "Clouds and darkness are about Him. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne." That is also our assurance. Nor, as it seems to me, is that simple faith in the moral reason behind all things any whit less rational than that elemental faith in the fundamental rationality and order of the physical universe, which to-day is sustaining thousands of scientific investigators of the unknown in all the laboratories of the civilised world. How often, as these words are being written, are baffled men of science all over the earth strengthening their hearts for new theories, new experiments, new ventures of the tameless reason of man, sustained by simple faith that the difficulties must yield and disclose the hidden order. When that impulse dies, the human intelligence and the human race will die too. Religious men and women should understand it, for they have the key to it in their own quest for moral reason in the great ways of God. But while we hold that faith, we must, like our brothers of science, press on into the unknown, and ask if we can tell why so many prayers remain apparently unanswered. One answer that must rise at once to the lips of all honest men and women must be: "Our prayers were apparently unanswered because it was not good for us that they should be answered. We have proved that in our own experience, since those days when the heavens seemed like brass over our despairing heads. We have learned something by that experience that we could not have done without. Life, it may be, has been barer and darker than it would have been had

our prayer been answered, but something has been given instead that we would not give up for all the world, and that bears in it the promise of indefinite retrieval of all that has been lost. The evil has been overruled in part already for good, and will, we believe, in future be completely so overruled."

Such is the answer of faith, and I believe that it is a sound answer. But let us look into it more closely. The prayer, it is said, was unanswered because it was not good for us, and for all, that it should be answered. This is something quite different from mere physical impossibility; it is a personal and a contingent moral necessity, which is not to be toned down to the mere generality that the maintenance of physical law is essential for man's general well-being. The argument is that we were not *morally* ready for such an answer to our prayer as we desired. Why? Now, I submit that on the view of the teaching of the Gospels, which has been taken above, there is a clear answer. There must have been some lack of faith, and of hope, and of love which made us morally immature. "We were not ready for it." Is there not a great unconscious admission here which goes to the very roots of the whole problem of apparently unanswered prayer? Does not the whole attempt to solve that problem, by putting the responsibility for unanswered prayer on the nature of the physical universe and God, assume that we were ready for it, and that our readiness for it was thwarted by something alien and niggardly in our environment? Surely that is making a very great and quite un-

proved assumption. Do we not instinctively feel in many of our prayers some doubt as to whether this or that particular thing that we greatly desire may really be best? About many particular "good things," though not about all, we surely must be uncertain, unless we claim omniscience, and so we say, in our praying, "if it be Thy Will." What do we really mean by that? Surely we mean "if we," or "if others are ready for it." We have here, in a word, a tacit admission of the whole point at issue that the great promises in prayer are to a large extent conditional upon our being able to make a good spiritual use of them—in other words, that we have a measure of faith, and hope, and love. Conversely, it is not surprising that He who showed these things in supreme measure should have received supreme answers from the Father.

But, coherent and attractive and in line with the whole New Testament teaching about prayer as in many respects this view may seem to be, is there not in it something dangerous and repellent? Do we not purchase the relief to faith in God, which comes from throwing the responsibility of the tragedy of human life on man, too dear? Does it not tend to make prayer a kind of dictation to God? Does not making faith a condition of prevailing prayer introduce the conception of merit into what ought to be a free filial utterance of the human soul, and an implicit submission to Divine wisdom and sovereign power? Does it not add a new and wellnigh intolerable burden to the trial of unanswered prayer to know that it was unanswered because of our own fault? Finally, does

not the whole theory tend to weaken our faith in the all-controlling power of God?

First, it is necessary to point out that if these difficulties follow, then they must all have been acutely felt by the first disciples and the first Christian generation. I do not see that there can be any real doubt as to what Christ said about prayer to His disciples and contemporaries. The only question is as to whether we are under the same order as they.

But, in truth, the difficulties seem to rest on some misunderstanding. To begin with, when we say that faith, hope, and love are conditions of prevailing prayer, we do not say that God answers only the prayers of those who have the "faith that moves mountains." He is sovereign love, and in His wisdom and freedom can hear the feeblest prayer from the most sinful soul. It does not impair the promise to the greater faith that God should hear, also, him whose faith is only "as a grain of mustard seed." All generalisations about God's ways must necessarily be incomplete. All that we are here asserting is the positive principle that true faith will always win its answer. But the sovereign Father may of His pure grace and wisdom go beyond this general principle and give great answers even to small faith. Again, to think of faith as meritorious is wholly beside the mark. When a man comes into true filial relations with God, he gets beyond merit altogether. Everything in the new life is of Grace. But Grace has its own laws. If we never think about it or realise it, it will in general have no power over us. If we take

time to realise it, it will remould us. But that is not to ascribe merit to thought and realisation, and think of our progress in the spiritual life as reward for our merit. The true relation here is not one of merit and reward, but of cause and consequence, condition and fulfilment, and so is it with faith and prayer.

Further, even though we may choose to set aside the plain teaching of our Lord on this want of faith as one of the great causes of our comparative impotence in prayer, one of the great reasons therefore for the sway of tragedy in human life, is it possible to deny the plain truth that it is our want of love rather than God's will that works countless sorrows in human destiny? We might just as well ascribe these sorrows, also, to the unconditional will of our Father in heaven, as impute to Him the tragedies of unanswered prayer. So, also, is it with hope. How much of the actual "martyrdom of man" is ascribed to the tyranny of nature and circumstance, when in truth its real cause is men's nervelessness, cowardice, and want of that courage of hope which has been the spring of all scientific progress. One must confess that the resolute optimism which keeps science at its countless unsolved problems is a standing rebuke to our religion, and is one of the great reasons why much of the virile intelligence of our day is being withdrawn from religious to scientific thought. Practical optimistic minds instinctively turn to that quarter of the horizon which is fullest of enterprise, energy, and hope. But if these things are true of love and of hope, is it not precisely what we should expect

to find that the sovereign powers of prayer should depend upon the faith with which we pray? Can we expect God to verify weak and false conceptions of Himself by striking answers to prayers, which start from cramped conceptions of His power and love and liberty to help men? If it is true that we are to blame for unanswered prayer, by all means let us face the truth. It is the only safe way and the only way worthy of sincere men and women.

It is further very important in understanding the whole matter that we should realise the great influence which the life of the whole community has upon the faith or unbelief of the individual. This, I think, answers the protest that it must add a new burden to life to ascribe unanswered prayer to our own unbelief, but that if we can ascribe it to the natural order or the inscrutable will of God the burden is easier to bear. It is necessary to say here first of all that this last ascription is a dangerous argument to use. Many things of old, many things even in the days of our forefathers, used unquestioningly to be ascribed to God's unconditional will which we now know were due simply to man's own ignorance and indolence. We shall see presently how often, under this fatal obsession, the Christian Church has set itself against "the increasing purpose" of God, and obstructed the path of science, and of political and social progress, and lost for generations the moral leadership that it should have exercised in the great life of the world.

The whole argument is, in truth, too narrowly conceived when we think of it as implying that if a

man prays for a thing which he is sure is good and fails to get it, the fault lies solely in himself. We are all, as has been repeatedly urged in this volume, members of society. We are bound to it by countless ties of kinship and sympathy. We partake in its heroisms and share in its apostasies. We experience contagions of faith and unbelief. Thus we have each our own personal life and freedom, and we can, up to a certain point, break clear for good or for evil. When Abraham began the story of faith by going out of Ur of the Chaldees, he at one and the same time acknowledged the fatal power of the unbelieving community to suppress dawning faith, and asserted the power of the individual to break clear of it. The other and the happier side of this power of the community over the individual is that it prevents the latter from falling below a certain level. When a community is inspired by any great emotion to a certain elevation of spirit, all its citizens for the time become heroic. But when it sinks it is, indeed, hard for any individual to rise above it. In general all heroic action in any community has its roots in the common mind. Such actions and the lives which find expression in them are like those islands which are peaks in a submerged ridge of mountains. They seem isolated wonders in the ocean, but in truth they are borne up by a common foundation of rock.

Now if we apply this well-known and generally admitted truth to the matter in hand we may say first of all that the roots of the faith of the Jesus of history lay deep in the historic faith of Israel. How He rose so far above it is His secret. He

lifted His disciples and the first Christian age towards His own level, though compared with His their faith was "as a grain of mustard seed." But they were a believing community, and the faith of that community even in "that hard pagan world" enabled its humblest members, as history shows, to live a heroic life, and its greater spirits to expect and to achieve great things by prayer. To-day the common level has fallen, and the whole influence of the society around us, which comes to us along a hundred channels, depresses the spiritual imagination, and contracts the horizon of what is believed possible.

The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.

To the temptations of worldliness there is added in our day an intellectual fascination by the order of nature, caused by the marvellous progress of science. It is not an age which easily believes in the Divine Transcendence and the expectancy, which a vivid realisation of that Transcendence inspires, that God will do anything beyond the ordinary "course of nature" and events. Therefore, the individual to-day often finds it very hard to maintain his faith in prayer and in the Living God. The contagion of the unbelief of his time paralyses him. Ancestral and subconscious influences are swathed about him and add their restraining might to the suggestions which pour in upon him from the literature, the art, and the thought of his time. In other words, the unbelief whose spell has to be broken is not simply his per-

sonal responsibility, but the corporate unbelief of his time, from which he is the vicarious sufferer. It is this spiritual solidarity of mankind which makes the existence of the Christian Church so vital a necessity for the life of the Christian man or woman. It may, indeed, be argued that our Lord's promises to faith and the Charismata to the early Church which were their fulfilment, were given to the Church as a whole rather than to individuals, and that in the present broken and depressed condition of the Church they are meantime in abeyance. I should not question this so long as we remember that it is the Church as a society of believing men and women that is meant, and not merely a Church orthodox in doctrine or order, or both. The promises of the Gospels are always to faith, whether it be "corporate" or individual. The awakening of the Church can only begin with the individual, but the individual can only reach his true stature through the society. Certainly, if the Church were nearly all that it ought to be, we should see the result of the life of prayer in the life of the individual in a way and on a scale that we rarely witness. So, in the first Christian ages the vitality of the corporate faith of the Church lifted its members above the torpor of the pagan world. So, to-day individuals, as has always been the way, break clear from the carnal level, and when they appear, strange and wonderful things happen. The dull world echoes and rings as it did of old, and the roll of heroes of faith begun in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is continued.

Such pioneers of faith, going right back to the

Jesus of history, one and all start from a richer conception of God than their contemporaries, and He still verifies that conception. May we not say that He only awaits to-day richer and freer conceptions of Himself, of His sovereign reality, power and love and liberty to help men? Such, at least, seems to me to be the plain meaning of our Lord's own teaching about faith.

But, finally, does not the view set forth in this volume exclude acceptance and resignation, such as our Lord showed in His prayer in the Garden, when, after repeated prayer that the cup might pass from Him, He said, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done"? How are we to combine resignation to evil with revolt against evil, submissive with rebellious faith? To-day when men think of faith, they instinctively, I believe, think mainly of submissive, acquiescent faith. I fear that the great majority of people, when they pray the Lord's Prayer, interpret the clause "Thy will be done" as expressing a believing acceptance of the inevitable. Yet in the context it can hardly mean that. It comes after petitions for the fuller revelation of the name that expresses the nature of God as Father, and for the coming of the Kingdom. "We have turned,"² it has been truly said, "what was meant to be a battle-cry into a wailing litany." That is symptomatic of the religious temper of our time. What seems empirically inevitable is regarded without more ado as "the will of God."

I fear that that springs not so much from a deepening of faith as from a weakening of the idea of God.

² By Archbishop Temple.

Yet we have here undoubtedly, in the moment of the agony at the very climax of a life of heroic, rebellious faith, the note of acceptance and submission, and it reminds us that at any moment the Christian must be prepared to carry the cross after his Master and "fill up that which remaineth of the sufferings of Christ."

The story, as we have it in St Matthew, is of a threefold prayer in the Garden for the passing of the cup, with submission to the Sovereign Will of the Father. Then comes the announcement to the disciples and the coming of the hour, the kiss of Judas, and the apprehension. A disciple draws his sword and Christ bids him sheathe it, and tells him that, if He chose, He could have more than twelve legions of angels coming to His support. This last remarkable saying is peculiar to St Matthew's narrative, but all the three narratives make Christ warn His disciples against "temptation,"³ which seems to imply that He has Himself just passed through and overcome it. Then He gives Himself up, and with the faith of acceptance passes on to a freely chosen death.

I think that the plain meaning of the whole Gospel story is that the faith of Jesus was in the main a creative faith by virtue of which He was continually militant against the whole dark realm of sin and suffering and tragedy, "the Kingdom of the evil one" of contemporary belief, and continually seeking to bring in a better world in its place. This was

³ Possibly a reference back to the first temptation in the wilderness, when Satan tempted Him to use the heavenly power amiss.

His normal attitude of mind, and is meant to be the normal temper of His disciples, who are sustained in this by their confidence in the power and love of the Father. But there came to Him an assurance that the end for which He laboured, the complete overthrow of sin and tragedy, men being what they were, could be better secured under the vicarious law by His going through the way of the Cross, and He deliberately ceased to pray for deliverance, and though He might have had it, trusted the overruling Will of the Father and went on to His death, as a freely chosen lot. His prayer was not, according to the text of the Gospels, refused. How could it have been refused, when immediately afterwards He says that supernatural powers would have delivered Him, if He had so chosen. We have, therefore, no record that any prayer of Jesus was ever refused. Indeed, in a singular passage which can only be explained as a reference to the prayer in the Garden, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to say explicitly that it was answered. But He ceased to ask it. He asked, instead, that the Father's will should be done. That does not mean that the Cross in itself was that Will. The Cross was an abomination, hateful then and always to God. But the Cross being historically there, it was God's Will that He should face and triumph over it, and, when He saw the real issues, this became His will too, and He prayed for the power to consummate them, and so by enduring the Cross destroy the cross, and all that world of inhumanity of which it was the symbol.

Now, how are we to translate all this into Christian practice? We are to go into the age-long war

against all sin and all tragedy of circumstance as well in firm faith that our Father wills to make an end of them all. That, alone, is the full Christian idea of God, which sets the standard for all Christian living and prayer. We are, therefore, to wage a truceless war against everything which corrupts the soul, and ruins the body and mind, and kills the liberty of man. We are to carry on this war by creative and rebellious faith, rebellious not against the Supreme Will but against the intruding and transient evils of human life.

But if by our own failure of faith, of love, and of hope, or by the vicarious law, we fall in the battle, we are to carry that battle as far into the ranks of the enemy as we can, to win the last inch of ground, and, in falling, to commit the unfinished battle to the Captain, who in the end will bring it to complete victory.

Let the victors when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

It may be that He will tell us that the cause needs our apparent defeat. But until He reveals that to us we have no right to abandon the struggle, and succumb to the powers of darkness, however overwhelming they may seem to be.

But, finally, does not the whole theory of the contingent character of the tragic element in human experience, which ascribes it in so great a measure to the shortcomings and sins of men, fatally weaken that faith in the sovereign power of God, which lies at the very foundations of every true Christian life? This is the most fundamental of all the difficulties.

It is stated with great force by Mr Donald Baillie in his recently published volume on *Faith in God*.⁴ He is in general sympathy with the view of the power of faith and the nature of outward evil taken by Miss Dougall, and in a greater or less degree by the "Cumnor group" of theologians, and recognises the importance of its contribution to a better understanding of the Gospel narratives. But he feels acutely the danger of taking this as a complete account of the Divine government in relation to the outward evil of the world. The religious nature, he believes, demands that we should believe that everything that concerns us is under Divine control. The believing man must believe that all things that touch him are in God's hands. But then if they are real evils, how can they be Divine appointments? He finds here a real paradox, and believes that we shall only be able to do justice to the still dimly understood reality by holding fast to both its terms.

We have here, obviously, an old difficulty coming up under new forms, the difficulty which divided Augustinianism and Pelagianism in the early centuries, and Calvinism and Arminianism after the Reformation, and which appears to-day in philosophical regions between the Absolutist philosophy and those who believe in a limited God. I think that Mr Baillie's criticisms are in the main directed against an extremer view of the outward evils in

⁴ This notable book only came into my hands when the whole of the earlier part of this volume was already in print, or I should gladly have availed myself of its aid to a much fuller degree than has been possible. It is a contribution of uncommon value to the present state of the question.

human life than I should hold, or than I think is necessary for the position maintained in this volume. I agree with him not only that God has ordained the world-order, by ignorance and misuse of which sickness, calamity, and death befall the children of men, and discipline them out of wrong ways of thinking and living, but I believe that over and above this He can so overrule evil that it works out supreme good. The Cross is there in history as the final proof of that.

In itself it is the sum of all human infamies. It originated in the very slums of the human heart, for it is the expression of cruelty, and of contempt for human nature. There ought never to have been a cross, as there ought never to have been stakes and racks and thumb-screws. The story of the Crucifixion, also, is a shame to Israel and Rome alike. Even the disciples of Jesus make a poor show in history at this point beside the disciples of Socrates. Yet God has so overruled it that it is the sublimest manifestation of Himself in human history, the living heart of all its higher progress. The Cross of Calvary has, in fact, destroyed crucifixion in all civilised lands.

It is thus, further, the supreme fact in human history which demonstrates that all sin and all tragedy are retrievable. It proves that Love is mightier than hatred, as the Resurrection proves that Life is greater than Death. Taken together, they are the Divine assurance to mankind of the final triumph of good over evil, of the goodness and the omnipotence of God, for what God has done with this Cross He can do with all the crosses of all His children.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAITH OF JESUS

THE question will at this point, no doubt, be asked, "Whither does your argument tend?" Does not the endeavour to make the miracles of Jesus part of the substance instead of the accidents of the Christian faith unduly complicate matters and lay an unnecessary burden on that faith in so difficult a time as our own? Have we not by the singular grace of God to our generation recovered the Jesus of history, and a simplified faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which is easy to believe and which yields a sufficient light for daily life? I should be disposed to say, in reply to this, that I share with those who feel the extraordinary value of the recovery of the Jesus of history. This is one of the greatest spiritual events in the story of Christianity and is working as a potent leaven both in the thought and life of our age.

But there are two things that make it impossible for many of us to-day to be satisfied with this simplified version of Christianity. In the first place, it is precisely the use of historical methods in the study of the personality and teaching of Jesus that has compelled us to see that there is something in His teachings about the power of faith and of prayer that is not to-day finding any

adequate expression in our current theology and religion, and that the simplified version, which tones them down to something little better than commonplaces about the power of a hopeful and courageous disposition in practical Christian endeavour, is anything but true to fair historical methods of interpretation. To reduce the plain meaning of such sayings in this way is to impose our modern limitations upon something of primitive genius and inspiration.

Secondly, we have a further difficulty. We whole-heartedly agree with all that is said about the immeasurable gain to religion of the re-discovery of the historical Jesus, and the humanising and deepening of the idea of God which has come with the realising of His universal Fatherhood. But we find it impossible to silence the question that immediately arises from that very deepening of our thoughts of "the Father." Why does Nature often seem so appallingly unfatherly? Under the old Jewish faith in "the great and terrible God," or under the God of the Schoolmen, or the Sovereign Lord of Calvin, or the great First Cause of the rationalist, the problem is not nearly so acute. But why do such things happen in the realm of the Father, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? In a word, the recovery of the earliest revelation of God as the universal Father has sharpened the edge of the master problem of Theism, the problem of evil. The more full of light the revelation is shown to be, the more sharply stand out the sinister and tragic elements in human destiny, and the more strange

seems to be the martyrdom of man. It is as if each new and deeper affirmation about God awoke a new and stronger denial from the unexhausted antagonist. Some minds do not seem to feel this difficulty. It is mainly to these, I think, that the simplified Humanitarian conception of the personality of Jesus appeals most strongly. They do not feel deeply the unexplained and apparently sinister side of Nature's dealings with man, which made the Jews of our Lord's time think of the tragic element in the world as due to the power of the Evil One, and which, as we have seen, led to such passionate protests against Nature from some of the most penetrating thinkers of our time.

We have already shown that on a sufficiently wide view of Nature, and of her total reaction on mankind, these pessimistic estimates of Nature lose much of their power, for historically we owe the very ethical standards by which we condemn Nature to the hard discipline to which she has subjected mankind. But does this widening of our view of Nature, which makes her the foster-mother of the intellectual and moral development of the human race, carry us all the way in explaining her remorseless and sinister side? I confess that to me it does not go quite so far. It goes a long way, but it does not go the whole way. It makes a very great deal of the human tragedy removable and therefore educative. We can see that if men grow in loyalty to each other, in love, in the sense of honour, in strength and courage, and the social virtues generally, then a very great many of the evils to which mankind are at present subject from

Nature will disappear. So, too, with the expansion of Science, man's sovereignty over the dark material forces must still further force back the realm of suffering and darkness. But few are those who believe that the utmost advance of ethical development and intellectual growth can ever abolish the tragic element in human destiny. That is to say, they practically all admit that there is at last an unconditionally fixed and fated element of the tragic in man's lot, an irremovable element of evil inherent in the earthly conditions of human life.

I think I should admit this, so long as we think of man as being purely an ethical and intellectual being. I cannot conceive of the utmost growth in the purely social virtues or the utmost extension, say, of physical science ever giving men that power over all physical limitations, which work suffering, evil, and death. But if man is capable of fuller growth than can be comprised under the words "moral and intellectual progress," if he is capable of coming into the fullest harmony of spiritual communion with the stupendous Being who is sovereign over all the material world, I see no coherent reason for not believing that all tragedy whatsoever is removable from his life, that he may not grow through fellowship with the Sovereign Father of All into complete mastery over all that chains and maims the immortal spirit.

If that, indeed, be the case, then all outward evils whatsoever are removable, and all alike fall into one great system of Divine education of the human race. It is, indeed, difficult to think of

any system as being a system of education unless its penalties are removable by the growing teachableness and fidelity of the pupil. Therefore if human experience is really an education of mankind, it would seem to require this conception of the removability of all evil whatever, in order to complete it.

If this be sound reasoning, then it is clear that we must not only look upon Nature as man's educator in science and in morality, but also in religion. Her purpose must not only be to elicit intelligence and the great social virtues, but her ultimate and consummating purpose must be to drive him to God, and to teach him faith, faith in God's power, God's holy love, and God's perfect liberty to help him. In other words, the whole history of man's religion, as well as his moral and intellectual development, has behind it the sublime and austere background of Nature.

Cardinal Newman has given noble expression to this thought of the necessity of Nature as meant to drive men not only into fellowship with each other, but into the beginnings of communion with God. Man, he says, "is permitted much" in the way of controlling "brute mischiefs" of Nature. But there is a reserved region into which he cannot enter, the region of "the Elements."

But o'er the Elements
One Hand alone,
One Hand has sway.
What influence day by day
In straiter belt prevents
The impious Ocean, thrown

Alternate o'er the ever sounding shore?
Or who has eyes to trace
How the Plague came,
Forerun the doublings of the Tempest's pace?
Or the Air's weight and flame
On a set scale explore?
Thus God has willed
That man, when fully skilled
Still gropes in twilight dim;
Encompassed all his hours
By fearfulest powers
Inflexible to him,
That so he may discern
His feebleness,
And e'en for earth's success
To Him in wisdom turn
Who holds for us the keys of either home,
Earth and the world to come.

The austerity of Nature is thus the foster-mother not only of the ethical virtues and of knowledge, but of the prayer of faith, faith in the unseen Reality and Power, as able and free and willing to help the suppliant to escape from or to master the destroying powers of Nature, and to give him that life which God Himself possesses by inherent right. The history of religion shows quite clearly that it is in its historic roots, as Sabatier has said, essentially "a prayer for life," a prayer which becomes wider and expands into communion with God as it develops, but which never loses this fundamental character. It reveals, also, that always in this prayer, inspiring and sustaining it, there is this vital thing, faith, conviction as to the reality and the friendliness of the unseen world. No one would ever pray unless he thought it worth while to pray.

To believe that it is worth while to pray means faith in the ultimate nature of things.

We now turn from these general considerations to determine what Jesus Christ believed about faith, and what is implied in that for His revelation of God.

We have seen in an earlier chapter how great was the position of faith in the religion of the Old Covenant. As Prof. A. B. Davidson has said, faith to the Hebrew was the fundamental virtue. But this discloses itself to the reader only when one looks for it, and discovers it under varying synonyms and parts of speech. So much is this the case that some scholars have maintained that there is surprisingly little about faith in the Old Testament. But when one turns to the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic literature there can be no question of their absorption in the importance of faith, or the all-determining place that it has in their thoughts. For any reference to faith¹ and its two synonyms, belief and trust, in the Old Testament, there are thrice as many in the New, as a reference to any good concordance will show, and when one remembers that the Old Testament is about thrice the length of the New, this, rough as is such a test, is full of meaning.

St Paul's writings, of course, afford the most conspicuous examples of this in the Apostolic writings. To him faith is the great fundamental human virtue, the indispensable condition of all salvation and life and blessing. The references which prove this will be found in an Appendix. They are so

¹ Verbal or substantial.

numerous that to give them here in the text would gravely overload the argument. "It is beyond doubt," says Titius,² "that for Paul the Christian life in its beginning and throughout its progress, in things great and in things small, is borne up by faith. This is true not only of the religious functions in the narrower sense, but of the moral functions also." From writings of the New Testament, slightly later and coloured by Alexandrine thought, we need take only one instance.

So deeply persuaded is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the central and vital place of faith in the spiritual life that, in what is perhaps the deepest and truest account of the Old Testament religion ever committed to writing, he goes through the long roll of its heroes and saints and finds faith the vital and characteristic virtue in them all. It is that in them which made them what they were and enabled them to do what they did, and by virtue of which they have written their names for ever in history, and made it easier for all other men to believe in the unseen world and in God.

Now while this is, I believe, absolutely true of these heroes, it is none the less also true that you get in the Old Testament itself nothing like this explicit and sweeping estimate of faith common both to St Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Where did the New Testament writers get this new insight into the all-important character of faith? Something has happened in the interval which has deepened their whole sense of

² *Paulinismus*, p. 214.

the value of faith. There cannot really be any doubt as to where these writers got this new and vital emphasis. They got it straight from Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves us in no doubt whatever as to this. In the verses which immediately follow the roll of heroes in the eleventh chapter, he speaks of Jesus as "the author" and the "perfecter" of faith. The force of this passage is weakened in our Authorised Version by the gratuitous insertion of "our" before "faith," but this seems to me, clearly, a mistake.

The obvious meaning of this expression is that great as the faith of these heroes was, it was as nothing in comparison with the faith of Jesus. He was its real author, its real beginner. They were like stars that died out in that sunrise of real faith which men saw in Christ. The writer has probably in his mind here the words of Christ Himself when the apostles said to Him, "Lord, increase our faith!" "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and removed hence, and it shall obey you." We have the same thought in the Epistle to the Hebrews freely reproduced in the writer's own noble fashion. As compared with Jesus, the heroes had faith only like a grain of mustard seed!

When we turn to the Gospels the secret of this great development in the mind of the apostles as to the sovereign importance of faith becomes, as I have said, perfectly clear.

It is due to the profound impact which the personality, the deeds, and the teaching of Jesus have made upon the whole Apostolic age. I need not repeat what has been said in an earlier chapter about Christ's constant call for faith in God. A reference back to that chapter will show that in effect Jesus said to the men of His land and time, "I have brought the Kingdom of God and all its blessings within your reach. It is for you to take it by faith." He welcomed all such adventurous faith as rose up within men's hearts in answer to His challenge, however crude and undisciplined that faith might seem to be, provided it did not presumptuously seek to use physical violence. But He who forbade this, seems to have preferred vehement faith to mere prudence.

Harnack has, I think, established that this is the meaning of the difficult passage: "From the days of John the Baptist even until now the Kingdom of God is preached and violent men are entering into it." As we have seen, all through His ministry He is continually inciting and encouraging faith, and towards the end, when the shadows of the approaching sacrifice are gathering around Him, the one doubt that seems ever to have crossed His mind as to the certainty of His approaching victory, is as to whether, even when He returns in glory and power, there will be faith enough in the earth for men to take what is brought.

Surely when we sum up what He says about the blessings of the Kingdom, and the need for faith,

we have precisely the same emphasis as in St Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Gospels the blessings of the Kingdom are the filial life in God, the hearing and answering of the prayer of faith, and the glory of the life to come. In St Paul we have the same things expressed in terms of his rabbinical training in analogies borrowed from the life of his time—justification, adoption, sanctification, and the manifestations of the Spirit, gifts or “charismata” of “prophecy,” “healing,” “miracles”—the potent influences that had come into the life of the Church with Pentecost, and, finally, the blessedness of life in the coming æon, when sin and death should be finally broken. All come from God by faith. In all this he is a true disciple of Jesus, who is the unquestionable historical “author” or “pioneer” and “perfection” of faith.

Turning again to the Gospel narrative, we find Christ’s call for faith on one and all around Him so constant that one cannot but feel that if He were here in the body in the world once more, and we all gathered round Him, and each of us told Him in turn the story of our failures and tragedies and sins, He would say to each of us: “What has been wrong with you, and what is wrong with you still, is that as yet you have not enough faith in God. You think that the trouble has been due to your indolence, your hatred, and your pride. It may be, but there is something deeper. You must have more faith in God. If you realise that, all evil and tragic things will lose their power.”

Now, it may be said, this diagnosis may be true,

but does it really help us? Is there not something even discouraging in His call for faith as the one thing primarily needful? We may discipline our anger, and mortify our pride, and suppress our fleshly thoughts, but who can create faith?

But surely if we look deeper there is something profoundly heartening for humanity here, an implicit assurance about God and the ultimate nature of things of the most sweeping kind.

If a father standing on the frozen waters of a lake encourages his timid child to come on the ice beside him, telling him to trust it, and that there need be no fear, is he not putting the whole force of his personality into telling him something about the ice?

It is quite clear that the whole teaching of Jesus Christ about God, expressed alike in His words and in the whole fashion and mould of His character, implies that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving, and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realises. This alone is what makes His incessant summons to faith, and to more faith, coherent and reasonable. This, again, seems to me to imply that mankind generally is under a kind of hypnotic spell about God, which is always contracting and chilling their thoughts of Him, and leading to all kinds of depressing and terrifying illusions about Him. The story of the growth of the disciples' faith is the story of the breaking of that evil spell. If we transport ourselves in imagination into the little company of His disciples, it is not difficult to imagine what the effect upon them of His continual demand for faith in God must

have been. Taken along with His own unbroken confidence of God's presence, power, and love, He must have seemed like one holding a continued dialogue with the Unseen One. Yet a doubt must have sometimes crept in. Was it not rather a monologue? No man but He heard the other Voice. We know what to think of men who hold long monologues, talking to people who are not there! Was He mad? The men who sat in the seat of authority, the wise and prosperous and devout, said He was. "He hath an evil spirit!" The issue, as He meant that it should, gradually became inevitable. Either He was a dreamer, or they and all other men were dreamers, walking in the darkness and deeming it to be light. Was He mad about God, thinking Him real, near, mighty beyond imagining, loving beyond hope, when really He was far away in His Heaven, terrible in His justice, and with difficulty restraining His anger? Or were they and all the world mad about God?

Such I doubt not was the early struggle of faith. The issue does not seem to me vitally different to-day. Either Jesus Christ was a dreamer about God, or we are all together dreamers, unbelievers and Christians alike. The difference is only one of degree. We are all alike wrapped in the great earth dream, and He alone was fully awake of all the sons of men; or we men and women of the twentieth century are broad awake to the reality, and He was dreaming His solitary dream. Nothing is more certain than this, that in His teaching about faith in God, and in His practice of it, Jesus was

absolutely unique among all the great leaders of religion that history has known. The science of religion has established this once for all. We know more or less exactly what all the acknowledged greatest have taught—the Chinese sages, Gautama, Socrates, Mohammed. In the midst of them stands this figure with His unique and immovable confidence in the Father, His faith that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving, and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realises, and that therefore our supreme duty is faith in Him, and the staking of everything we have upon Him, and His purpose of good for mankind. Christianity is this or it is nothing at all. Everything turned then and everything turns still on whether on this central matter Jesus was a dreamer, or the only human being broad awake to the eternal, in such a fashion that if we would come into touch with ultimate Reality we, too, have to follow Him. No other option indeed in such a case is open to us, for not only has none of the great leaders of religion said such things of God in the past, but no one is saying them to-day, except such as, whether they know it or not, are His disciples. This is still His solitary and peculiar teaching about God, the very core and essence of His Revelation.

The first disciples, I take it, must for a time have wavered between the two worlds, the old sane Jewish world of thought as it must have seemed to them, and this new, startling, fascinating, and glorious Presence of the Divine that was breaking in upon them, at first a dreamlike vision of Beauty and then taking to itself, more and more, the firm

outlines of Reality and making the old Jewish thoughts in turn dreamlike. As St Paul put it, the first Christians "saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." I remember that many years ago I was at a long concert of classical music, and not having any adequate understanding of its greatness, I was feeling rather weary of it, and my attention was wandering, when my eye fell on the face of a man sitting near me. I was startled, for his face was transfigured as by an interior light, and his eyes were shining. He seemed like one carried beyond all fear and care and sorrow. It was quite impossible for me to doubt that he was hearing things I could not hear, and seeing things I could not see. I saw the "light of the knowledge of the glory" of music on his face, so that for the moment I could see that it was, though I could not hear what it was. Something like this was the first Christian experience, and it has remained the standard ever since. The typical Christian name for the Supreme Being is, it has been truly said by Ritschl, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and so unique was the vision and the experience even to a Hebrew, that, as we have seen, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews can say that Jesus was to him, the beginner and the perfection of faith. The power of the personality of Jesus was so great that, working through the disciples, it broke the hypnotic spell of unbelief and swept the whole first Christian generation, the generation that wrote the New Testament and reared the Christian Church into something of His own faith in God, and so perpetuated the seed of it in the world.

What makes this immovable confidence of Jesus in God so profoundly reassuring is the other great marvel of His personality,—His profound sense of the sacredness of man. There have been not a few among the heroes and even among the saints of faith of whom we must admit that this cannot be said. We feel that such God-intoxicated men and women have been so absorbed in the Divine glory that they seem to have had too little sense of the pathos of human life, its cruel mysteries, the haunting "sense of tears in mortal things." Their very zeal for God has made them sometimes, we feel, unduly hard upon men. What are we to make of the saints who condoned and even encouraged persecution, and the theologians who have given us great thoughts of the Divine purpose, "deep as the grave, high as the Eternal throne," but have combined them sometimes with inhuman thoughts of men?

Something of Christianity was surely lacking there, which makes us feel that they never adequately felt the real anguish of the unsolved "riddle of the painful earth," and the shadow that it seems to cast on the face of God. But we cannot say this of the Crucified. He has taught us all humanity, just as He has taught us faith. From Him the modern world has learned the secret of that "enthusiasm of humanity," which is the very leaven of all that is finest and best in our civilisation. Yet He who kindled this fire of the enthusiasm of humanity is the same who has taught us, and who to-day above all others stands for unbounded confidence in Him who ordained the whole tre-

mendous system of discipline under which all men live and suffer and die.

Their compassion for suffering humanity has driven not a few in our day into rebellion against "the Cosmic order," and denial of a conscious, loving, and Almighty Creator and Sovereign, who has ordained, it would appear, "the martyrdom of man." That this is one of the tensions in the mind of our own age, is manifest not only in the philosophical writers quoted at length in an earlier chapter, but in the works of a great artist like Thomas Hardy, the secret of whose pessimism I take to be that he strove to combine the Christian valuation of man with the negation of the Christian view of the cosmic order, and made a futile attempt to derive human reason, nobility, and piety from a Being who is in effect lower and meaner than man. How could Hardy's mocking "President of the Immortals" ever have created human beings like Tess and Gabriel? How could the Unconscious Mind ever blindly work its way out to the "all things fair" that the author of *The Dynasts* hoped for? With Lord Bacon we may surely say that we "could sooner believe all the fables of the Alcoran." There must be a more reasonable account of a cosmos that every true man of science believes to be greater and more full of order than he has discovered, every great painter knows to be lovelier than he has painted, and every great poet knows to be nobler than he ever sang. Is it not all in perfect conformity with this inner conviction of thinker and artist alike that God must be mightier and more loving and readier to help us all than any

one of us has ever realised, and that Jesus should put at the centre of His message the call to unbounded faith?

The solution of Jesus is that the Absolute is so much greater and better and fairer than we are that we cannot as yet fully understand Him, but none the less can go beyond our knowledge by faith, just as genius continually wings its way beyond demonstration, showing the road that the slower-footed understanding must follow. He Himself is embodied Faith and so becomes embodied Revelation. The glory of God shines through Him, and the Universe responds and reveals its hidden depth and meaning in His life and deeds and death and resurrection. Thereby a way is broken through the dense cloud of unbelief for the coming of His Spirit.

The faith of Jesus in the Almighty Father, like all faith, is woven of three strands—faith in God's power and reality, faith in His love, and faith in His perfect liberty to help men.

(1) The first is the primitive thing in all religion: "Power belongeth unto God." Whatever weakens this primitive thing in religion weakens faith. In the very nature of the case Religion conceives of this Power as power over the world. This excludes the identification of God and the world, for all real religion appeals to God against the immediately threatening or tempting world. We may use the term the Supreme Reality instead of the term the Supreme Power, because it conveys even more strongly the sense of superiority over the world of appearance. Compared with God

the world is a vanishing mist, but it is not a mist that He cannot control. Some may feel that there is something lacking in the words "appearance" and "reality" as descriptive of the world and God. Control is certainly essential to the religious conception of their relation.⁴ It appears to me that Jesus had a unique awareness of the reality and power of God and that He was able to communicate this in a unique degree. With most of us the real plague is "the seeming unreality of the spiritual life." The world to-day is so urgent and so interesting that we can hardly help conceding reality to it in the full sense, and giving only what remains of our energy and thought to God. There is a curious and pathetic passage in one of William James's letters in which, in reply to a questionnaire, he says that for himself he has no immediate sense of the Divine Reality, but that he recognises that other men, and notably the great mystics, have it, and that he believes their testimony. I think this is to-day a very common experience. Again, even when men have this "open vision" it fluctuates. Great experiences of danger and great scenes in nature suddenly call it forth. I remember one friend telling me that sometimes in the acutest dangers of the war an almost physical sense of the reality and power of God came to him and drove away all fear. The brother of another, travelling alone by night to London on the way to the front, experienced, as the hours went by, an ever-deepen-

⁴ Professor Hogg shows how the Idealist conception of appearance and reality may be combined with the Christian conception of the miraculous. *Redemption from this World*, ch. v., and pp. 262-5.

ing sense of the presence of God, which changed the whole course of his life. Yet another once described to me how, in rock climbing in a remote and sterile region in the north-west of Scotland, his companion was suddenly killed beside him, and how in the vast and wonderful mountain solitude around him, as he stood beside the shattered body far from human aid, the whole scene became suddenly full of the Divine Presence. If such experiences are truthful, their only possible explanation is that something that blinds us has been taken away.

Most of us have direct or indirect experiences of this kind in our memories. They do not seem to us hallucinations. Rather do we recognise them as moments of awakening to what is always there. Always there is that sense of Power, Sovereignty, and Reality as an essential part of the experience.

Now it is impossible to study the personality of Jesus without seeing that this awareness of God was part of the very substance of His daily life. What is momentary and transient with most of us, was for Him unbroken. It comes out in His words. "God is to Him the Almighty Presence and Reality. In opposition to the Almighty power, man simply does not count for anything. And more must be said. Not only in the domain of ethical and religious life is God the only Mighty One. The same is true in the physical Universe. The world signifies nothing, God alone signifies everything." ⁵

Even more strikingly does it come out in His actions. Take, for instance, the story of His

⁵ Titius, *Die Neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit*, vol. 1. *Jesu Lehre vom Reiche Gottes*, pp. 108-109.

raising the daughter of Jairus. He is making His way through the crowd with the father, when the messengers meet them with the fatal words—"Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?" One may safely say that every other human being in history would have taken that word "dead" as final, and turned back. Nobody would have blamed Him if He had done so, and He risked His whole reputation by going on. Yet He went on. What was death in comparison with God? That lets us see deep into His spirit. The going on is every whit as unique as the wonder which followed. The unique quality of His religious life explains the unique event which followed.

I have said that this profound sense of the Reality and Power of God is the fundamental thing in all religion whatever. The note of the Sovereign Power of God resounds through the whole Old Testament and finds its richest expression there in those sayings about His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and eternity, of which the literature of the Old Covenant is so full. Theism, as Tiele has truly remarked, can never compromise on this point of the Divine omnipotence without losing half its power. We must, of course, distinguish here between true and false ideas of omnipotence. God may limit Himself by creating free human spirits. It is difficult indeed to see how He could be really omnipotent if He could not create what He pleased. But it is inconceivable that He can be limited by any independent and rival power. This is fundamental to the whole mind of Jesus, and is an essential element in His faith.

(2) But it would be quite conceivable that if this profound sense of the Sovereign Reality of God stood alone, the possession of it might be a curse instead of a blessing and emancipation to men. The "seeming unreality" of God may in fact be a condition of man's preserving his sanity until he wins such confidence in the love of God that He is not only able to bear, but to exult in the sense of His Sovereign Reality. So we come to the second strand of the threefold cord of Faith, the Love of God.

Jesus Christ reveals this by His teaching, by His signs, by His whole personality, and supremely by His Cross. His seizing upon the relationship of fatherhood as yielding the truest name for God, and His assertion, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," at once give us an enduring symbol of the Divine Nature, and the assurance that the Reality excels the symbol.

Further, His own filial personality mediates to us by its incomparable human sympathy more perfectly than words can do, the very heart of the unseen Father.

Yet again the "miracles" are surely part of that revelation. They show us how we are to think of the Divine Love and Pity, which cares not only for the souls of men, but for their bodies. They show us that we are to think of the Divine Love in the simplest way as delighting in the dispelling of pain, the restoring of sanity, the satisfying of hunger, the preservation of life, the dispelling of

premature death, just the things which ordinary human love glories in being able to do. But supreme sacrifice is the most convincing thing of all, when it is freely chosen for love's sake. So by teaching, by living in converse with His fellows, by His signs, and by His Cross, Jesus reveals that the Supreme Reality is the Supreme Loving Kindness, so that they who receive the revelation know the awakening of Faith.

(3) But all would have been of little avail unless there had gone along with faith in God's Sovereign Reality and His Fatherly Love faith in His perfect Liberty to help men, His power to intervene in the ordinary course of events, to act creatively whenever the real spiritual interest of His children requires it. The weakening of this is, perhaps, what to-day hampers Faith more than any other cause. The shadow of the "closed system" falls upon prayer, obsesses men's imagination and limits their hopes. The world becomes rigid. The glove of silk becomes a glove of stone.

Now it is perfectly clear from all the Gospel narratives that Jesus Christ had no such chilling shadow upon His faith in God. One of His best modern interpreters has put the matter here decisively. Jesus, he of course admits, knew nothing of our modern science. But even if He had, it would not have made the least difference to Him in this regard. As it was He had a definite idea of the course of nature. "He knows about seed-time and harvest, and the rules of the weather; He knows the need of preparation for the building of houses and vineyard towers, as for the waging of war; He

knows all this and gives it its due place, and even praises the unfaithful steward for his cleverness. Yet, nevertheless, His summons to trust in God and prayer sounds as absolute as if there were no such thing as prudence and human toil. In the miracle-working faith this thoroughgoing and universal way of looking at things comes to the point in the sharpest way. The world of Nature is, in comparison with God, nothing, and He alone is the Almighty Lord.”⁶

I do not think that there can be any doubt that this is a true account of the faith of Jesus. It was an essential part of His response to the Sovereignty of God. He believed, as I have said, in His perfect liberty to help men, a truth which was obscured so long as men believed in the completeness of the scientific explanation of reality, but whose possibility is now in process of being demonstrated by our fuller knowledge of the limits of science.

⁶ Titius, *Jesu Lehre vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 109.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

It has been said in a preceding chapter that when we speak of faith in God to-day what is usually meant is trustful acquiescence in the course of events. That this is a large part of the life of faith is undoubtedly true. The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, "Father, not my will but Thine be done," is a clear proof that it was part of the faith of Jesus. But by far the larger number of references to faith in His teaching are of an apparently very different kind. The faith to which they call us is to anything rather than acquiescence, it is rather to uncompromising rebellion against what seems the natural course of events. Men are encouraged to seek deliverance from diseases incurable by the medical science of their day, from maladies that by long neglect have become chronic, from premature death, and even from the untamed forces of nature itself. What are we moderns to make of such an astonishing saying as this: "Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you that if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed hence, and it shall obey you!" No doubt, as I have said, this is metaphorical language. But Christ certainly meant something more wonderful than what He had done just before He

said it. When taken in its whole context it means something very drastic, and quite unmodern. I take it that it can only mean, that if a disciple of Jesus sees any obstacle, however great, standing in the way of the Kingdom of God, he is to go into the battle against it in the rooted assurance that in so doing he is allying himself with the will of God, and the firm reliance that God will support and reinforce him by His providence and His Spirit. He is not to prostrate himself before the mountain as if it were an expression of the will of God, and trust to God to overrule the mountain for good; he is to seek to explode the mountain and clear it away, by asking great things from God and expecting great things of God.

Are the words really capable of any other meaning? But if it be so, then, clearly, faith of this kind carries in its heart rebellion against the natural course of events, and this again carries with it the irresistible conclusion that there must be much in that course of events that is hateful to God. In other words, the whole of this type of teaching about faith carries with it a certain doctrine of the evil of the world.

It is clear that Jesus Christ conceived of the Kingdom of God as including in the first instance purely spiritual blessings—faith, hope, and love; but it is equally clear that it included also all that concerns man's sound physical life. It is impossible to believe that He who showed such solicitous sympathy for those diseased in body or sick in mind, those who were hungry, those who were in peril from the storm and the wave, could think otherwise

of the Kingdom of God. But if it be so, then how did He regard that mighty course of events which is unrolled before us in human history? What view did He take of the presence of the evils that are manifest on so colossal a scale in the human story? Did He regard them as part of the unconditional will of God? In view of His many sayings about faith of this rebellious, creative type, I do not see how He could possibly have thought anything of the kind. The teaching about faith is rooted in a certain view of the objective evils of human life, without which it loses all its force and meaning; and it is largely because there has crept into our modern thought another view that the remarkable character of this teaching about faith has lost much of its vitality for us at the present time. That view is that the outward ills of human life, being caused by the physical environment, are due to natural law, and as these laws are unconditionally decreed by God, the ordinary evils of life are all to be taken as if they were due to the Divine appointment. This is, of course, simply the "closed system" idea of nature asserting itself under a religious form. A good example of this type of reasoning is found in the deeply interesting *Confessio Fidei* of the Dean of St Paul's. In this "outspoken essay" he maintains a true Divine Incarnation, in the person of Christ, but at the same time repudiates the whole miraculous element in the Gospels. "Still less," he says, "in my opinion, ought we to demand that He should break through the fixed laws of nature, which He Himself ordained, and in accordance with which He orders the course of the world. In so

doing He would not have exalted Himself; He would have condemned His own creation.”¹ It appears from this that it would have been spiritually unworthy of Jesus to heal organic disease, to still the storm, and to rise from the dead on the third day. The really noble thing would have been for him to recognise that organic physical disease, the whole realm of natural disaster, and calamitous and premature death were parts of the glorious Divine order. Now whatever we may say of this, it must surely be plain to every unprejudiced mind that it is in discord with the entire New Testament view of things. Further, it is in similar discord with common sense. Every sane human being in practice acts on totally different principles. He does not accept the ravages of tigers and snakes as part of the Divine order. Why should he have accepted bacilli in the body or the brain as such? Every normal human being prays for deliverance from accident by storm or flood, and still more from premature and violent death. This is a universal and natural instinct, and surely rational as well. Yet according to this passage all such prayers are for God’s interference with “the order which He has made,” and by such prayers the man is “condemning” God’s creation. On what conceivable philosophy, moreover, the Dean can maintain that so mighty an intervention as the Incarnation is Divinely worthy and beautiful, while he condemns a complete Resurrection as unworthy of God, I fail to understand. Surely both are “interventions” in

¹ *Outspoken Essays*, Series II., p. 49.

the ordinary course of nature, or they are nothing at all.

The thought of an individual may remain at such a stage of thought as is mirrored in this *Confessio* for a time, because life is short and its intellectual, like its practical, problems are perplexing, especially when the mind involved is widely and acutely sensitive to the complex currents of thought of our age. But it is surely inconceivable that the thought of an age can rest there in its search for coherence and stability.

The perils of this conception of the outward evils of life as being part of the unconditional Divine Will for man become obvious in another paragraph of the same Essay. "The Divine Life, under human conditions, was the life that ended in the Cross. And it is worth while to remind ourselves that what is best for us is best also for others. The Church at present suffers as much from the vicarious hedonism of its social ethics as from the self-indulgence and greed of some among its unworthy adherents. Both are equally materialistic, both alike rest on an estimate of good and evil which makes the Incarnation unintelligible."²

The general drift of this, taken in connection with the Dean's other writings, is that Christ bore the Cross of the world's evil fate, and that this is the highest kind of life. If we would live the highest kind of life we, too, must bear the cross. So far we are all on common Christian ground. We are all under the vicarious law. But when the next step is taken, "the cross is best for others," we get

² *Outspoken Essays*, Series II., pp. 48, 49.

on somewhat dangerous ground. In part it is true. Historically, every human being has to bear his share of the common lot. But what selfishness and sinful apathy and cruelty that need not be may creep in and shelter themselves under that formula—"The cross is best for others"—however cultured, humane, and noble in spirit some may be who formulate it!

From this second proposition the Dean advances to a favourite topic, "the social hedonism" of the modern progressive party in the Church, which, it is not obscurely hinted, may be as materialistic as capitalist greed. Of course it may, but is it? And is its aim fairly described as "social hedonism" at all? It seems to me that the long delayed but gathering Christian protest against adverse social conditions has, at its roots, a deep sense of the sacredness and value of all human beings. Its true aim is not an increase in the pleasures of the poor, as the phrase "social hedonism" insinuates, but the assertion of their inherent right to conditions of life that will not breed disease, atrophy of the higher nature, unnecessary exposure to casualty, and premature death. Each and all of these aims seems to me to be as it were visualised in the "signs" of Jesus, and revealed by Him as of the very nature of the Kingdom of God, and therefore of the will of the Father. If this is hedonism, then Jesus Christ was a hedonist. But so is every one of us when it comes to dealing with our own children, or with any human being for whom we have real affection. What should we think if any one remonstrated with us for our solicitude

for the physical and mental welfare of our children and for the provision of conditions essential for that welfare on the plea that it is the highest calling of our children to bear the Cross, that if that life was good enough for the Son of God, it is good enough for them? The truth is that in such reasoning we are moving in a sphere quite remote from reality.

But to turn from a writer to whose genius we are deeply indebted in other spheres of thought and practice, does not the conviction that the miseries of human life are unconditional and irremediable enter deeply into much of the higher thought of our age? I have quoted Huxley and Bertrand Russell as representative of the agnostic thought of their time. But have things been so much better with the thoroughgoing Idealists?

As I read Mr Bosanquet's account, for instance, of Religion, or Mr Bradley's account of the Absolute, I find that while morality is the region in which I am to strive continually for social progress, it is in Religion or Philosophy that I am supposed to rise into a region in which the contradictions and tragedies of life are transcended. I get "above the battle," and see that all things have their place, the lower and the higher, the real and the less real, in the Absolute. I am reminded of the well-known passage in a greater master from whom the disciples derive much of their inspiration.

"All the various peoples feel that it is in the religious consciousness that they possess truth, and they have always regarded religion as constituting the true Sabbath of their life. Whatever awakens

in us doubt and fear, all sorrow, all care, all the limited interests of finite life, we leave behind on the shores of time; and as from the highest peak of a mountain, far away from all definite view of what is earthly, we look down calmly on all the limitations of the landscape, and of the world, so with the spiritual eye man, lifted out of the hard realities of this actual world, contemplates it as having only the semblance of existence, which, seen from this pure region bathed in the beams of the spiritual sun, merely reflects back its shades of colour, its varied tints and lights softened away into eternal rest. In this region of spirit flow the streams of forgetfulness from which Psyche drinks, and in which she drowns all sorrow, while the dark things of this life are softened away into a dream-like vision, and become transfigured until they are a mere framework for the brightness of the eternal.”³

That is, assuredly, a fine passage containing truth that we deeply need to know. Religion is “the sabbath of the spirit,” and we see nothing truly until we see it “under the form of Eternity.” But deep as is the thought, is there not more than a trace of opium in it? One cannot but remember that Karl Marx began his pilgrimage as an enthusiastic disciple of Hegel. Is it surprising that if this was his conception of religion, his passionate hatred of oppression, his sense of the wrongs of the poor made him discard it altogether, and that all over Europe to-day his disciples in turn are proclaiming with a myriad voices that religion is mere “dope”? It is impossible to get

³ Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, Eng. Tr., vol. 1 p. 3.

the Hebrew prophets into Hegel's account of religion, nor, it seems to me, is it any more possible to get into it the deeper and humaner mind of Jesus of Nazareth; and an account of religion that cannot hold these seems to me too narrow. Christian thought cannot admit of a God so wholly "above the battle." There is surely no room or ground here for the "faith" of which Jesus mainly speaks. Is there room for more than that kind of acquiescent faith which trustfully accepts the course of things because it believes that all contradictions are for ever solved in the Absolute, and that our highest life is to get "above the battle" too?

I gladly admit that many who have found their main intellectual inspiration here have been what Heine claimed to have been, and that they may justly be called "brave soldiers in the warfare of the liberation of humanity." But did they get their inspiration from that conception of the Absolute, or from an older tradition in which they were reared?

The real drift of this form of idealism, so far as its philosophy of religion is concerned, seems to me to find much more congenial expression in Hegel's notorious acceptance of the Prussian State of his day as the ideal and final form of human government, than in the passion for social reform of some of his followers, from Marx and Lassalle onwards.

Is not the root of the whole error, for such I cannot but believe it to be, found in the belief that the tragedy of human life is unconditional and immovable, and in the fatal readiness of even the

best human beings to put the evils that confront them straightway into that category? In that case the only escape is to ignore them as unreal and illusory. I have been quoting agnostic and idealistic philosophy to illustrate this point, but what could not be said in like terms of the story of the Christian Church?

Modern history alone can furnish us with many examples. Why was it that the Protestant Churches at the Reformation were so slow in attempting the conversion of the world? They accepted heathendom as a great immovable mountain in the way of the Kingdom of God. They further acquiesced in it as the sovereign will of God, which it was obviously foolish and impious to oppose. Luther himself, who had taught such great things about the power of faith, took this view, and took refuge in the thought that the Lord would dispose of heathendom and "the Turk" at His second coming in glory and power. About two hundred years passed before evangelical Christendom began to realise that this was a mere opiate for the heart and conscience, and that it was not the will of God that the majority of the human race should live and die without the Gospel. But it took another century and all the momentum of the Evangelical Revival before the world mission of Protestantism got definitely under weigh, and it took a man of heroic mould to lead the more earnest Christian men and women of his time to pass over from acquiescent to creative faith. It is very significant that William Carey began his enterprise by stating his two famous principles,

"Expect great things from God: attempt great things for God." Something had obviously occurred to change his thought of God, to make it greater and more generous in this matter than Luther's. That development in his idea of God changed the faith of acquiescence into rebellious faith, and in the light of that he learned to look upon the gloom and evil of heathendom as removable, and to expect the Divine help in his attack upon it. Had he been able to anticipate the method of dealing with evil suggested by Hegel, he might have lived a much more peaceful life; but Christian history would have been very different.

If we come a little further down in history, the struggle for the abolition of slavery begins. Again, Wilberforce finds the Christianity of his day practising an acquiescent faith, and tolerating all "the horrors of the middle passage" on the plea that negroes were inheritors of "the curse of Canaan"; in other words, throwing the responsibility for the irrevocable judgments of God on an accursed race. We know how, even after his conversion, the devout Newton continued for a time to command a slave-ship. But the leaven of the Revival had penetrated more deeply into the little group of Abolitionists, and Wilberforce, and a greater and more generous thought of God was stirring within them, which gave them courage to pass beyond acquiescent to creative faith, and to sweep away instead of bowing down before the "mountain," or drugging themselves with thoughts of its "unreality."

The years pass on, and the progress of the Industrial Revolution fills the new factories with

white serfs and child toilers. In the struggle against the evils of the new economic movement religious opinion was divided. The Hammonds, in their striking book on *The Town Labourer*, have put the two different interpretations which divided the Evangelicals as follows:

“The devout Christian, confronted with the spectacle of wrong and injustice, may draw either of two contrary conclusions. In the eyes of his religion the miner or weaver is just as important as the landlord or the cotton lord. Clearly, then, one will argue, it is the duty of a Christian State to prevent any class, however poor, and however trivial its place in the world may seem to be, from sinking into degrading conditions of life. Every soul is immortal, and the consequences of ill-treatment and neglect in the brief day of its life on earth will be unending. If, therefore, society is so organised as to impose such conditions on any class, the Christian will demand the reform of its institutions. For such minds Christianity provides a standard by which to judge government, the industrial and economic order, the life of society, the way in which it distributes wealth and opportunities. This was the general standpoint of such a man as Lord Shaftesbury. But some minds draw a different moral from the equality that Christianity teaches. Every human soul is a reality, but the important thing about a human soul is its final destiny, and that destiny does not depend on the circumstances of this life. The world has been created on a plan of apparent injustice by a Providence that combined infinite

power with infinite compassion. The arrangements that seem so capricious, are really the work of that Power. But the same Power has given to the men and women who seem to live in such bitter and degrading surroundings an escape from its cares by the exercise of their spiritual faculties. . . . Thus, whereas one man looking out on the chaos of the world calls for reform, the other calls for contemplation: one says, 'Who could tolerate such injustice?' the other says, 'Who would not rejoice that there is another world?' " 4

The nerve of the difference here, clearly, is that whereas the former view holds that the evil state of human society is of human wrong-doing and is therefore removable by the help of Almighty God, and calls for creative faith, the latter holds that in the last resort the evil state of society is due to the appointment of Providence, is therefore unconditional, and calls only for the faith of acquiescence.

The torch of progress fell from the hands of those Evangelicals who held the latter view and was carried on by Shaftesbury in the great career which reached its climax at last in the passing of the Factory Acts.

It is impossible and needless to follow the story all the way through, or to give more than one further illustration. To-day by far the greatest of all public questions is the question of the prevention of war, and the unifying of the nations in the common enterprise of humanity. It surely throws a flood of light on the prevailing religious teaching and thought of our time that all over the great

⁴ *The Town Labourer*, pp. 223, 224.

camp of the British army in France the chief difficulty of belief of thoughtful men was the difficulty of "God and the war." How could one possibly reconcile the goodness of God with the existence of the horrors in which they were living? It was always, that is to say, taken for granted that God was responsible for the war. Just as it was in each of the cases cited above, the acceptance of heathendom, of "the horrors of the middle passage," and of the white slavery of early industrialism, so with many is it still with regard to war. Piety of a certain type regards this supposed Divine decree with trembling, but acquiescent, faith. Like Calvin, with reference to Divine predestination, it would say, "I confess that the decree makes me shudder, nevertheless it is true." Now, two sinister consequences inevitably follow from this belief. First of all, if we must throw the ultimate responsibility for the horror of the war upon God, the whole thought of God becomes darkened, and faith in Him becomes by so much the more difficult for those who still cling to it; while in many it is completely destroyed. Secondly, all those who hold this belief are thrown out of action for all hopeful and constructive labour for enduring peace. The belief that God decrees war must inevitably tend to make war inevitable. Surely the way of rebellious rather than of acquiescent faith is the way of Jesus. To Him who healed the sick it cannot be a matter of Divine decree that men should maim and torture each other; to Him who raised the son of the widow of Nain and gave the youth back to his mother, and wept by the grave of Lazarus

for human sorrow ere He revealed the "glory of God" by restoring him to the home of Bethany, it cannot be a matter of absolute Divine decree that ten millions of the youth of Europe should be lying in early graves, and that for so many homes the lights have gone out.

If He really wrought those deeds, if they were characteristic of His mind and revealed His Father, then this is no case for acquiescent, but one rather for rebellious and creative faith, the faith which says, "War is an evil thing, it has no deep roots in the Divine nature of things, it is an intruder in God's world and it must be driven out and destroyed."

But the course of our argument has now brought us to the very heart of our problem.

What is the general view of the outer evil of the world, the tragic element in human experience caused by man's subjection to the material environment, that has been implicit all along in our argument, and that is now emerging into clearer light? I would say, to begin with, that the view towards which, in my view, the argument leads, is grounded in the best modern Theistic thought. It assumes that thought, and, starting from it, goes a stage beyond it, still, I think, developing its fundamental principles. First of all let us make that general Theistic position clear to our own minds. In general it may be stated thus. The world is a place of soul making. The supreme end is the creation and development of personalities. It may have other ends, but the final key to the whole is found in the ideal values, and in the spirit of man in which these are expressed and God is revealed.

From this standpoint modern Theism is able to show reason and meaning, too, in the hard schooling of man by Nature. We can show to-day with something approaching demonstration that not only man's physical being but his intelligence was developed in the struggle for existence, that conceptual thinking itself, as well as scientific thought is, historically, largely due to the pressure of the environment, and to the advantages which better ways of thinking gave to those who discovered and practised them. It was because men paid so dearly for their ignorance that they first learned to love wisdom.

The same stern schooling drove them into social groups, kept them there and taught them to discover and develop new ways of living that made society more secure and more progressive. There is no great virtue that dignifies human nature that has not a history, and behind that history there is always that same remorseless, insistent pressure of the environment. Religion itself has a history as well as intelligence and morality. A vital impulse like that which "first drove living creatures from the water to the land, and from the land to the air," and sent man voyaging from the arctic to the tropic zones, has prompted him alone of all living things to cast his life out into the unseen and the intangible, in quest of succour and at last of life everlasting. Behind that, too, we see the pressure of the dark, ambiguous natural environment, and of sorrow, suffering, and death—in a word, of the whole tragic element in human experience. Religion cannot be completely contained within any

single definition, but assuredly always at the heart of it there is the endeavour to "overcome the world." It is "a prayer for life." It is a protest and appeal to the Eternal against the sorrows, sufferings, and indignities of the world of time. In the flood of light which the Science of Religion has cast on its historical nature the whole Communist theory of religion as "dope" disappears as a complete perversion of facts. Its roots lie, not in the desire of the mighty to drug the masses, but in the vital revolt of personality against the tragic element in experience. One of the great elements in the rise and development of religion has been death itself, death which has aroused the human spirit from animal acquiescence in its doom and sent it on the quest for immortality. Such is the general argument of the best Theistic thought to-day. Far from finding anything in the ultimate nature of the universe inconsistent with the Divine Love, it finds in that Love alone the true impulse and motive of Creation. Love is essentially creative, and we are really living in the heart of a great creative process, and witnessing the bringing into being of free human personalities and their education, discipline, and development.

The whole theistic conception has thus been wrought out with a breadth and thoroughness that in my judgment make it stronger and more satisfying than it ever has been before, and that make it, also, the most reasonable solution of the problem of Nature and Personality in the field to-day.

The argument of this book, indeed, rests upon this common Theistic ground and only proposes to carry it a stage further.

It is part of that conception that the whole outward world of evil which humanity has to undergo, the whole tragic ascendancy of the material over the spiritual, out of which so many individual tragic experiences come—outward accident, plague, famine, premature death of all kinds, and countless disasters of fortune and frustrations of toil by the niggardliness of Nature—are all in the Divine counsel educative and creative of knowledge and of virtue, of all in short that goes to make a full human personality. I do not, of course, mean that this is true of each individual. Calamities may happen to him that, being what he is, he cannot at the time surmount, falling on him not by his own fault, but by the working of the vicarious law. But the general principle is as I have stated it. Now it would seem, naturally and logically, to follow from this general principle that none of these evils are unconditionally fixed and fated as part of man's inevitable lot, but are all relative to his imperfect and faulty development and are therefore remediable, and, ultimately, removable.

The penalties of every rational educational system are capable of being escaped or removed by the pupil's learning his lesson properly. The reason for their existence disappears with the ignorance or the vice which calls them into action. Were it otherwise they would, of course, cease to have any educative power, because with their unconditional continuance the motive with which they supply

the pupil for learning his lesson or amending his ways would be withdrawn. Why should he trouble himself to do either when he must suffer the penalty in either case?

But the thoroughgoing application of the idea of divine education to human destiny by Theistic thought would seem to carry with it the thoroughgoing consequence that all the outward evils of human life are removable if we could find and follow the right way, and, as we have seen, the human race has progressed in knowledge and virtue just in proportion as it has believed in the removability of the ills of its lot, and has resolutely set itself to remove them. The standard philosophical Theism of to-day hesitates here in the application of its own fundamental idea; it is not certain that there may not be a tragic element in the very nature of things that is unconditionally fixed and fated for man, so long as he is man, and that is, indeed, due to his very finitude. But if that is so there must be tragedy in heaven, tragedy as an eternal element in all creation. Against this I would set forth the idea that all human tragedy is educative, and is meant to be finally overcome. In other words, I would submit that current Theism should here speak with a more consistent voice, and carry clear through its own fundamental faith that the material exists for the spiritual, and that the present ascendancy of the material over the spiritual is educative and transitional in the Divine intention.

If we thus make the Theistic interpretation of the riddle of the world on this point clear and consistent with itself, we shall be now in a position to

test and, it may be, to develop it by bringing in the historical personality of Jesus. Have we not here, by the grace of God, a unique opportunity of discovering what the Universe really is? Here is the ideal man, or at least, as all Theists must agree, the man who, of all men, comes nearest that ideal. Shall we find that He is subject, just as all the rest of us are, to that brute material element whose dominance over the powers of spirit is at the heart of all the outward tragedy of human life? If it be so then I cannot help thinking that here we have a grave difficulty for Theism which will be all the graver the clearer our estimate of the uniqueness of Jesus. But on the other hand, if disease and death fled away before Him as the Gospels say they did; if the storm fell silent at His word; if by His creative faith He was able to dominate the powers of hunger; and if, finally, He broke the bands of death itself, then to me it seems as if here we have a supreme confirmation of our faith in the spiritual character of the universe, and a prophecy of the day when all "death and crying and mourning" shall have passed utterly away. If it be so, then these miracles of Jesus cast a clear and penetrating light on the whole dark mystery of outward evil in human life; they are not external evidence of the revelation, but part of the revelation itself. In their light all that is dark and mysterious in our outer lives, and in the life of humanity, falls into its place in that vast process of creation whereby God is making and disciplining human personalities, "bringing many sons into glory." Yet, on such a view, we do not fall into that error, which we have

seen to be so fatal to human progress and religious faith, of ascribing the evil of human destiny to the unconditional decree of God. The existence of evil in the world is not part of the eternal Divine order. It is a transient element, and seeing it in the light of the Eternal, faith may say of it what a Father of the Early Church said of the terrible Diocletian persecution, "It is but a little cloud ; it will pass away !"

Humanity has endured terrible things, it is true, in its long battle and march, but what treasures of hard-won knowledge of God, of nature, and of human life, what records of heroic struggle, of love that has not failed, of faith that has overcome the world, it bears with it as enduring results of that struggle! It is, as we have seen, possible to take a gloomy view of that "long result of time," to arraign the process through which it has been achieved, to use the light of the ideal which has been given us for other purposes in order to cheapen the human achievement, and accuse the great world of nature, and Him who ordained it, and thereby subtly to assert one's own superiority to them all. I do not think that we find that note in the greatest and finest spirits who, while they feel most deeply the sorrows of humanity, can most justly measure what it has achieved. Rather do they "glorify God" and His world of nature and the consequent result in man.

Let us hear St Francis as, worn out with physical toil and suffering, he draws near his end:

"Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures, and specially our brother, the Sun, who brings

us the day, and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a great splendour: O Lord, he signifies to us Thee!

"Praised be my Lord for our sister the Moon, and for the stars, the which He has set clear and lovely in heaven.

"Praised be my Lord for our brother the Wind, for air and clouds and calms, and all weather by the which Thou upholdest life in all creatures.

"Praised be my Lord for our sister Water, who is very desirable unto us, and humble, and precious and clean.

"Praised be my Lord for our brother Fire, through whom Thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong.

"Praised be my Lord for all who pardon one another for His love's sake, and who endure weakness in tribulation: blessed are they who peaceably endure, for Thou, O Most Highest, shalt give them a crown!

"Blessed be my Lord for our sister the Death of the body from whom no man escapeth. Woe unto him who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are found walking by Thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm. Praise ye and bless the Lord, and give thanks unto Him, and serve Him with great humility."

Man has paid a great price for what he has won, but what he has won has been worth it all. There is no indication that he is as yet at anything but the beginning of his day's work; and when one

measures from what he has come there is no reason to doubt but that he will achieve incomparably greater things by the Grace of God. But I can conceive of no better way of arresting his progress than by assuring him that there are divinely appointed barriers to his progress in the subduing of the material to the spiritual.

What has come over religion that it has allowed science to get ahead of it here? What man inspired by the true spirit of science will set any boundary to his aspiration to discover the secrets of the earth and the heavens? Why should religion accept limits to the power and the love of God and the possibilities of prayer? Against all such limits set by man's unbelief stands Christ with His incessant call for faith. It is indeed strange that men should have been so blind to this, and to its far-reaching significance. We are afraid of His words, we try to minimise them and tone them down. But the truly significant thing is that the fear that man might make too much of them never seems to have crossed His mind. His one fear seems to have been not that the men of His time should believe too much, but that they should believe too little in the power over evil of believing, loving, and hoping prayer. If He were among us in the flesh to-day, would He speak in any different fashion? But if He did use such words to us would we not be compelled either to disbelieve them, or else to recast and expand all our thoughts of man, of Nature, and of God?

The malady of our time lies in its contracted thoughts of God. We think too narrowly and

meanly of His Power, His Love, and His Freedom to help men. That is what the "miracles" of Jesus and His teaching about Faith mean. That God is more near, more real and mighty, more full of love, and more ready to help every one of us than any one of us realises, that is their undying message.

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APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL LINDSAY ON THE EARLY CHURCH

“BUT, coming to the heart of the matter, it seems to me that Christian Science is founded on a scheme of metaphysics which is crudely absurd, and has built upon that a faith, which, to my mind, is entitled to all respect. So far as Christian Science is concerned I fear it is impossible to separate foundation from superstructure; but those who are not Christian Scientists may do so. Metaphysics apart, what is the kernel of this faith? Is it anything else than this, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the body, as well as of the soul, and that He can heal disease as well as sin? The whole Christian Church of the first three centuries believed this most earnestly. It is in the Gospels, the Epistles, and in the whole of the earliest Christian sub-apostolic literature—in the very forefront of them. Church historians have ignored the enormous part that the ministry of healing played in the early centuries of the Christian Church. I shall have something to say about it by and by.¹ Meanwhile you have only to read Harnack’s great book on *The Expansion of Christianity* to see its presence and its power. I am almost inclined to say, from the standpoint of Church history, that the modern Christian Science has set out on a quest after a lost faith—once a most real part of Christianity—and

¹ *Sc.* in class lectures.

has in this way satisfied a dumb quest of the soul which Church teaching has left unsatisfied.”²

APPENDIX B

ST PAUL'S VIEW OF FAITH

I SHALL avail myself here of a summary account of the place of faith in Paulinism, taken from Titius's able and exhaustive work *Paulinismus*.

“From this it follows that faith is the decisive mark of the Christian state, and includes in itself the whole of the spiritual conditions of salvation. It would be hard for any judgment to be further from the mark than Wernle's contention that for Paul faith indeed stands at the beginning of the Christian life, but falls into the background in its further course; that as a missionary he was a preacher of faith, but that with well-established churches he brought in the moral demands without associating them with faith. Let one consider only how Paul, not only during his missionary labour, but also retrospectively, sets forth the rise of Christian faith as the decisive mark of the Christian position (1 Thess. i. 3-8 and ii. 10; 2 Thess. i. 3, 4, 10; Gal. ii. 16; 1 Cor. ii. 5, iii. 5, xv. 11; 2 Cor. viii. 7; Rom. i. 8, xiii. 11; Phil. i. 29, ii. 17; Col. i. 4; Eph. i. 15); how nothing lies nearer to his heart than the maintaining of the Christian standing in faith (1 Thess. iii. 5-7; 1 Cor. xv. 2, xvi. 13; 2 Cor. i. 24, xiii. 5; Rom. xi. 20; Col. i. 23; Eph. vi. 23); the increase of faith (2 Cor. x. 15; Phil. i. 25), and the improvement of

² “Modern Religious Difficulties: an Address delivered at the opening of the College Session, 1907-8,” *College Addresses and Sermons*, by Principal Lindsay, D.D., LL.D.; Maclehose.

its deficiencies (1 Thess. iii. 10). So decisive is Faith, that according to their relation to it Christians are distinguished as believers from unbelievers (1 Thess. i. 7; 1 Cor. vi. 6, vii. 12-15, x. 27, xiv. 22, 24; 2 Cor. iv. 4, vi. 14 *et seq.*; Col. i. 2; Eph. i. 1), and are bound together by it like children of the same household (Gal. vi. 10). Yes, Faith forms the foundation of and characterises the new Messianic Epoch (Gal. iii. 23, 25), and all doctrines are therefore to be measured by the test whether they agree with the norm of faith (Rom. iii. 27) or make faith void and destroy it (1 Cor. xv. 14, 17; Rom. iv. 14). These high sayings about the power of faith are quite intelligible when one considers that every one of God's manifestations of His salvation are appropriated and preserved by faith. Upon faith and unbelief finally rest men's fortunes for grace or reprobation (Rom. xi. 20-23). The preaching of the apostle is a preaching of faith (Gal. i. 23, iii. 2-5; Rom. x. 8-14, 15-17). Through faith not only justification completes itself, but also permanent access to God (Eph. iii. 12), and also salvation (1 Cor. i. 21; Eph. ii. 8), while the unbelieving as such are together condemned (2 Thess. ii. 12). Through faith Christians are sons of God (Gal. iii. 26); all the promises become the property of believers (Gal. iii. 22; Rom. iv. 16). Through faith Christians receive the Spirit (Gal. iii. 14; Eph. i. 13), who in fact is called the Spirit of Faith (2 Cor. iv. 13). Through faith Christ dwells in them (Eph. iii. 17) or they are awakened with Christ (Col. ii. 12), and God works in them (1 Thess. ii. 13, *cf.* Eph. i. 19). According to the measure (and relation) of faith all

usefulness in the Christian community and all gifts are determined (Rom. xii. 3, 6). It is the starting-point (Eph. iv. 5) and also the goal (Eph. iv. 13) of the Christian community. In faith its freedom (2 Cor. i. 24) and all its joy and its peace (Rom. xv. 13; Phil. i. 25) are rooted.

As faith is the permanent faculty through which all God's manifestations of salvation are discerned, so also is it the principle of all Christian living. The whole walk of the Christian on earth is a walk in faith (Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 7). In addition to direct communion with the grace of God, faith reveals its activity, next, in the appeal to Christ (Rom. x. 12-14; 1 Cor. i. 2), and in prayer. Prayer, indeed, is never expressly indicated as a fruit of faith, but since the Christian's filial standing and permanent access to the Father are mediated by faith, prayer too must be rooted in faith, since it is only the carrying out of that filial right. . . .

To the summons to stand fast in the faith the passage in 1 Cor. xvi. 13 joins in the closest way, "Quit you like men, be strong." Manly maturity (*cf.* 1 Cor. xiii. 11; Eph. iv. 13) and the strength of the inward man (Eph. iii. 16, *cf.* Col. ii. 7) shows itself in courage which one shows towards opponents, a courage which does not allow itself to be moved by disappointments and sufferings. . . . This manly and heroic disposition is the peculiar work of faith. For in 1 Thess. v. 8 faith appears as "breast-plate," in Eph. vi. 16 as "shield," in Col. ii. 5 as "bulwark,"³ and in conformity with this prayer is represented under the figure of a fight (Col. iv. 12),

³ Soden's translation of word rendered "steadfastness" in R.V.

as is so often done with the whole of life, and in particular with the work of evangelisation, which usage, indeed, has its very real ground in the facts. The specific work of faith referred to in 1 Thess. i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 11, can indicate nothing else than courage to endure suffering (1 Thess. i. 6f. ; *cf.* iii. 2-5). Faith also leads to vigilant watchfulness and self-examination. It passes easily over, therefore, into a great moral force. Titius therefore sums up his whole argument as follows: "Thus, beyond all doubt, the Christian life in its beginning, as in its development, in things great and in things small is borne up by faith. This is true not only of the strictly religious, but also of the moral functions." "Faith works through love" and "what is not of faith is sin" (Gal. v. 6; Rom. xiv. 23). "But if faith in its origin is morally conditioned, and further shows itself morally active, it follows that in faith we have the synthesis of morality and religion. It appears in the first rank as the permanent means for man's appropriation of the Divine Salvation. It comes into being under the impression of unconditional dependence on the grace of God. Yet at the same time it is throughout, in its rise and in its progress, morally conditioned. Clearly, then, the conception of faith (held by St Paul) is better fitted than any other to give expression to the whole genius of Christianity." ⁴

That this is substantially a true account of the fundamental and vital place of faith in St Paul's whole conception of the Christian life seems to me beyond reasonable doubt. In all St Paul's writings

⁴ *Paulinismus*, pp. 209-216.

it is a basal principle that not only justification but sanctification and the mediation of all the blessings of the new covenant come by way of faith. Not a few think that this singular emphasis upon faith is a peculiarity of St Paul, part of his original contribution to Christianity. But in the light of what has been said on the teaching of Jesus there is surely nothing original about it. It is wholly derived from the "author and perfection of faith," and simply repeats the new emphasis on faith which He introduced. Original St Paul certainly is, but his originality comes in at a later stage. He seizes upon Christ's principle, and applies it with extraordinary freshness, boldness, and insight, to the new situation created by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the gift of His Spirit. But so far as I can see there is nothing said in his writings about the vital place of faith in the Christian life which his Master had not said before him.

APPENDIX C

R. H. HUTTON ON PRAYER

"In His (*i.e.* Christ's) sense, it is of the very essence of prayer that it aims at the establishment of the Divine will and the annihilation of all that is inconsistent with that will. It is not to God's omnipotence primarily, but to his spiritual nature, that Christian prayer is addressed; the whole purport of it being that the unity of the Divine Kingdom may be asserted and its laws established."⁵

⁵ R. H. Hutton, *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, 1899.

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The Golden Years

A Story of the Holy Family

by a

Wife, Mother, and Apostle of
Christian Charity

and

Joseph Husslein, S.J., Ph.D.
Co-Author and Editor



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Dedicated to
The most Holy Spirit
Giver of Knowledge
Understanding and
Wisdom
Source of Love and Light
Spouse Divine of
Mary Immaculate
Who Brought into the World
Christ the Lord
“Son of the Carpenter”
Fashioner of the Universe

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FOREWORD

IT IS now many years since the original document on which this book is based came unexpectedly into my possession. Its literary beauty fascinated me no less than the devotional atmosphere which breathed through it.

Its writer, a woman of social standing in the world, had pictured for herself the successive events in the Hidden Life of Christ, set against their constantly varied background: the Judean hills, the sands of the desert, the City of the Sun, the waters of the Nile, the temple at Jerusalem, or the little, lilac-embowered cottage in the village of Nazareth. And so, entering into the lives of the three hallowed persons of that Earthly Trinity, she took note of their every word and action, their thoughts and sentiments and emotions, and recorded for us her impressions.

Above all, as a Christian wife and mother, it was her peculiar gift and privilege to penetrate most deeply into the ineffable intimacies between Mary and her Divine Child, and to describe no less truly, with a woman's intuition, the tender and beautiful relations that existed between the Mother of God and him who was given her as virginal spouse and protector.

On the literary side, the writer enjoyed, in girlhood days, the advantage of a home that has left in American literature an honored name, while she herself possessed what might seem an inherited skill with the pen. But duties of motherhood in a family richly blessed with

children and the distressing cry of charity work to which she could not be deaf, calling on her "from the four quarters of the big town, through all the days of the year," left her little leisure to exercise this gift.

Here, in part at least, is found the reason for the title of "Co-author" that must be assumed by the present writer.

The original document was written not as a book but as a spiritual journal, at the urging of a friend, in the hope that it "might help a little in a corner of the vineyard." It was unbroken as yet by any divisions or chapter headings, but merely with each day's brief and fervid writing duly dated.

Though I had never met the author, the treasure remained precious to me for its own worth, authentic literature as it was.

To evolve, therefore, a book out of the often incomplete writings, never reread by the author; to fill out extensive vacancies left in the narrative; above all, to carry through the work in the style and spirit of the original, and to preserve in every detail the inspiration derived from it—such was the task I had set for myself.

The book, therefore, is strictly a co-operative work. Some chapters are of necessity my own. Yet every effort was made to preserve throughout that refinement of style and buoyancy of spirit which marked the original. After repeated efforts, it has finally been made into one complete and unified work.

Tolle, lege!—"Take and read!"

The Co-author and Editor
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July 3, 1945

THE INCARNATION

THE music of the throbbing stars lay hushed in the midnight sky. Angels leaned from the expectant Heavens and the Just looked out from their holy prison with bated sighs for the dawn of liberation which trembled upon Mary's lips.

The Will of God waited upon the will of His Creature, with love alone to plead His cause.

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women," had been the angelic salutation to Mary.

Her soul was troubled at the words, too deep for her to fathom, and she wondered in silent awe at the meaning of this message.

"Fear not, Mary," the angel said, "for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end."

And Mary said to the angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"

Here is the first recorded sentence from the lips of

Mary. Remarkably enough, it is a solemn affirmation of her purpose of perpetual virginity. To render this possible Joseph's consent was necessary. So, at the very opening of these wonderful events, the Spouse of Mary appears, in an unseen but intimate connection with the mystery of the Incarnation.

The angel answering said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born in thee shall be called the Son of God."

Then, to the magnificent declaration of God's will in her regard, dependent only on Mary's acceptance, the messenger from Heaven's Court added a special sign in confirmation of his words — the conception, namely, of a son by Elizabeth in her old age: "Because no word shall be impossible with God."¹

To Mary's soul, as now she stood in the presence of her mighty destiny, dependent only on her free choice, the vision of its earthly tragedy no less than of its transcendent joys unfolded itself before her. "The burden of Duma calleth to me out of Seir: 'Watchman, what of the night?' "²

What of the night?

The delight of holding the Divine Babe to her breast was to be clouded by Mary's foreknowledge of dark events which the Prophets had so vividly foretold. Into this we may well believe God had given her special insight, in view of the very choice before which Mary stood. But the burden of her sublime vocation called to her in the strong appeal of humanity, and more impera-

¹ Luke 1:28-37.

² Is. 21:11.

tive than all things else, she knew it to be the Will of God. Hesitation for her was out of question. To her lips leaped the inevitable words:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; *be it done to me according to thy word.*"³

In that moment Heaven descended to earth; the Creator became incarnate in His creature. Within that virgin womb of Mary, at the coming of the Holy Spirit, under the overshadowing of the Most High, by the co-operation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the unity of the ineffable Godhead, the Word was made flesh.

Prostrate and in silence, the angel worshipped the Incarnate Word, two natures in one Divine Person, enshrined in the immaculate womb of the Mother of God. Fulfilled was the yearning of all the ages, answered were the prayers of the patriarchs and prophets.

"And the Word was made flesh."

Transcendently beautiful as was the soul of Mary from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, the ascensions of her spirit henceforth were to be even more unspeakably wonderful with the actual realization of her vocation to Divine Motherhood.

As a duty and high responsibility, with consequences that even she could not yet fully measure, the little maid of Nazareth had submitted herself unreservedly, with all the power of her being, to the high Will of God. In that act she accepted her own part in the entire redemptive plan of God.

With the dawn, therefore, of that new-born day, the soul of Mary spread its spotless wings and began its loftiest flights to the dazzling empyrean of the spiritual life. "Then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth."⁴ God

³ Luke 1:38.

⁴ Is. 58:14.

alone and His Christ were now exalted above her. Heavenward was the Father's face, on the supreme glory of which Mary satiated the cravings of her soul. About her was the love of the Holy Spirit, whose mighty wings enfolded her. Within her, remote from the turmoil of the world, lay the thrilling silence of the Word made flesh, lapping her heart in the peace which passeth all understanding.

But neither was Mary blind to the material works of God's creation. These no one ever saw, or apprehended, or loved just as Mary did. She contemplated them not only with the unveiled purity of her own eyes, but with a reflex of the vision of Christ. Wherever her eyes rested: "Behold, the glory of the Lord stood there . . . and I fell upon my face."⁵ Her soul was in a continuous state of worship and adoration, without undue strain of her natural faculties.

The supernatural had become like the natural to her. Constantly that silent Life beneath her heart was lifting away created veils from before the face of the Uncreated. And so the Light within shone forth upon the moon and stars, the shower and the dew, the ice and snow, the dawn and darkness, the song of birds and the music of the fountains, and bid them bless the Lord in full sweet canticles of Mary's praise. The works of God thus held for her a deeply individual significance, for she gathered them all up into the warmth of her heart for the little unborn hand of Him Who had created them, the King Who ruled most perfectly within the kingdom of her love. "What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?"⁶

⁵ Ez. 3:23.

⁶ Ps. 72:25.

The more humble we are, the more mighty is God's power in us. It became a very need for Mary's soul to plead with all creation to witness how the majesty and might of the Most High had wrought great things in her, because He had regarded her utter lowliness. "He bowed the heavens and came down."⁷

Christ participated in and sanctified her every thought and word and deed in those long nine months when He remained most intimately Mary's own. He sanctified them not only for her sake, but for her virgin mothering of the whole human race. He was one with her and she was one with Him, while in the silence of His own created heart He stored with reverent love the sweet, deep story of those wondrous days.

Mary, in turn, carried Him into the heart of all she did: her lying down and her rising, her daily home tasks, but most of all in plying the needle and loom as her busy fingers fashioned simple garments for the tender body and the fragile limbs—so strangely simple for Him Who is clothed in the glory of the Godhead.

If in an hour of heavenly prayer her soul folded itself about the Divinity abiding within, her thoughts turned to Him no less in her loving communings with her holy spouse, when the weakness and weariness of womanhood drew her to the comforting presence of Joseph. All this was to be possible once the Mystery of the Incarnation had been announced to Joseph and he was bidden by the angel to take unto himself Mary his wife.

But the divine marvel which stirred Mary's heart with unfathomable joy was the great truth that in her

⁷ Ps. 17:10.

own flesh and blood she could clothe the Son of God. Wonderful the thought that the eyes which would look into hers, the lips which would seek her kisses, the tongue which would prattle His love, the hands that would fondle her, and the feet that would follow in her guiding steps, would all have been tenderly formed out of her lifeblood and molded to the likeness of her own fair being. For was not that very being of Mary itself planned by God after the predestined Humanity of His own Incarnate Son, that so Christ, in turn, might assume the likeness of Mary, in which for all eternity He would be glorified before angels and men.

Possessed by the living Word within her, swayed by the Supreme Power imprisoned within the tender confines of her flesh, well might Mary exclaim: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."⁸

There are periods in a mother's life when the little fluttering soul of the unborn babe seems to draw to itself and absorb all thought, all aspiration, all physical power and activity, the very vitality of the mother's being; when it seems to lay hold of her with a silent strength. So Mary moved and had her being in the sweet tyranny of that engrossing life, "consumed yet quickened" by the vital Power which was draining to Itself the lifeblood of her heart and the life-love of her soul.

But with the draining of Mary's life into the little struggling life of her unborn Babe, in her heart throbbed the joyful realization of the fact of the God-man's helpless dependence upon her for His very life and for the salvation of the whole human race. Since God had thus decreed, He had placed Himself at her

⁸ Gal. 2:20.

mercy and tarried willingly the allotted time with her, while all the world was waiting for His coming. He fed upon her life as the Beloved among the lilies, while she breathed and moved under the loving watchfulness of the Father's eye, quenching the thirst of God's eternal love.

2

THE VISITATION

AND behold thy cousin Elizabeth," the angel had said to Mary, "she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God."¹

Not questioning the angel's word Mary set out to give aid to her aged relative, miraculously blessed with child by the Almighty.

It was a long journey, and difficult, partly through Galilee, partly through the unfriendly land of Samaria, and partly through the hill regions of Judaea, to the village of Karem where stood the home of Zachary and Elizabeth.

Who accompanied her as she rode over the narrow, winding paths, on the little beast of burden that so lightly carried her, while tabernacled within her breast she bore her Lord and God? Joseph could not as yet have been invited to accompany her, for the Mystery of the Incarnation was still unknown to him and Mary had been abiding in her mother's home. It was here, no doubt, that all provisions for her safety had been wisely taken.

So she arrived at Karem where beyond the olive trees

¹ Luke 1:36-37.

and palms came into sight the friendly cottage of Elizabeth. Descending quickly from her mount she hastened forward to salute her cousin.

And it came to pass, the holy writer tells us, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth herself, filled with the Holy Spirit, in a loud voice greeted Mary, saying:

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?

"For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."²

Then it was that the Incarnate Word dispensed His first recorded gift of grace through Mary. John in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth as well, were filled with the Holy Ghost. The unborn child, endowed with the use of reason for at least that sacred moment, recognized the Savior and received from Him the gift of sanctifying grace, as had been predicted by the angel to Zachary: "And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."³

Thus, through Mary, John was enabled to perform what we might call his first official act as the Precursor of the Saviour.

Even so early, before Christ had visibly appeared among men, the role of Mary as Mediatrix of grace with her Divine Son was wonderfully made manifest. "Not before Mary arrived and saluted Elizabeth," wrote Origen in the early centuries of the Church, "did the infant exult in the womb. But in the instant that Mary

² Ibid. 1:42-44.

³ Ibid. 1:15.

uttered the word with which the Son of God in His mother's womb inspired her, did the infant exult in joy."⁴

Here let us pause a moment.

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," the angel had greeted Mary in the Mystery of the Annunciation.

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb," Elizabeth saluted her in the Mystery of the Visitation.

Set in sequence these two salutations, insert in their proper places the names of Mary and Jesus, and you have the first part of the "Hail Mary" as recited daily over all the earth:

"Hail [Mary], full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, [Jesus]." To this we but add our own part, the humble petition that we too may be helped by the power of her word with God: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

There is the genesis of this most powerful and beautiful prayer, which rightly we couple with the "Our Father" taught us from the lips of Christ Himself.

But there is one more reason why in Elizabeth's inspired reply to the salutation of Mary she calls her "Blessed."

"Blessed," she says, "art thou *that hast believed*, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."⁵

Implicit belief in His word is God's urgent demand. Because Moses *twice* struck the rock that water might

⁴ Hom. vii, in Luc. 2.

⁵ Luke 1:45.

flow from it, the Lord severely showed His displeasure; but the simple faith of Mary in her unfaltering reply to the angel's message made possible the Redemption and with it the restoration of the supernatural life lost through Adam. In striking contrast to the unbelief of Eve stood the firm belief of Mary. "Blessed art thou that hast believed," and blessed in her is all mankind.

Deep within Mary's soul the Spirit of God was active, and taking up quickly the burden of Elizabeth's prophecy Mary herself broke forth into her own magnificent chant, the Canticle of All Canticles, that closes the long series of songs and psalms of the earlier ages, while for us it was to become the Hymn of a New Day where hope gives place to fulfilment and the law of fear recedes before the law of love. A most splendid cry of joy with which the high heavens re-echoed and the nine choirs of the angelic host worshipped the Babe in Mary's breast.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Because He hath regarded the lowliness of His
handmaid;
For behold from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed.

Because He that is mighty hath done great things
to me;
And holy is His Name.

And His mercy is from generation unto generations,
To them that fear Him.

He hath showed might in His arm:
He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of
their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat,
And hath exalted the lowly.

He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.

He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful
of His mercy;
As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to
his seed forever.⁶

There is one great thought which runs through this mighty canticle wherein Mary humbles herself that she may magnify God. *Humilitas*, the word used in the Latin Vulgate, has in the third line above been rendered as "lowliness," which there expresses its exact meaning. It is not humility which Mary ascribes to herself, but it is humility which she practices. She can find but one reason why God selected precisely her out of all the children of men, and that reason is her own utter "lowliness"—her insignificance in the eyes of men. Thus all power redounds to God alone, and nothing is alleged as due herself.

Charmingly the thought of the lowliness of Mary, as here described, is echoed by the poet Patmore when naïvely he inquires of her:

Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little maid like thee?

Littleness, Confidence, Self-Surrender. These are the foundation of Mary's greatness, so far as that depended on her own co-operation. No one in our day, it may well seem, has pierced with such startling vision to the very core of the significance contained in these three

⁶ Luke 1:46-55.

words as did Thérèse of the Child Jesus, when she gave to the world her secret of "Spiritual Childhood." Briefly expressed, it is "the way of confidence and self-surrender"; and from these two practices, she tells us, follows love. Most like the little Mary, she was satisfied in her daily life to cast to Jesus the flowers of "little sacrifices"—as she deigned to call them—and "win Him with caresses." Hence in her too is something of that deep and simple faith of Mary which made it possible for her to add in childlike daring: "That is what I have done, and that is why I shall be so well received."

Mighty things God had done for Mary. Forward she looked into the future, in her great Canticle of the *Magnificat*, and prophetically beheld how all generations should call her "Blessed," even to the end of days. Backward, too, she gazed, through the long vista of years, into the distant past, where instance after instance of Jewish history unfolded itself to her, how God had "showed might in His arm," how the proud were scattered in the conceit of their heart, and the mighty cast down from their seat, and the rich sent empty away. Through her mind, inspired by the Spirit of God, might naturally have flashed a passage from the canticle of Anna, the mother of Samuel:

The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak
are girt with strength.
They that were full before have hired themselves
out for bread.⁷

But God had shown mercy to "Israel, His servant," meaning the people of God, "as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever."

⁷ 1 Kings 2:4, 5.

Like a great orchestral close, the song of Mary ends on this great theme. But the seed of Abraham are spiritually the children of the Church through all the ages—that Spouse of Christ in whom alone the prophecies of old are verified and the ancient figures have at length reached their sublime fulfilment.

Just one more verse is added by St. Luke to conclude the Scripture account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, a precious verse, for it tells us that for "about three months" Mary abode with her cousin, performing evidently her lowly work of neighborliness and charity. "And she returned to her own house."⁸

⁸ Luke 1:56.

3

JOSEPH'S PERPLEXITY

IF MARY followed the rabbinical counsel of her day she would have been only about twelve and a half years old when espoused to Joseph. Another complete year would then have elapsed before the public marriage could take place, when amid solemn ceremonies Joseph would bring her from her parental home to abide with him under his own roof. Conventional literature, however, ascribes to her the age of about fifteen at the time of her marriage.

Espousals among the Jews were quite different in their effect from "engagement" in our day. They actually constituted a true and legal marriage. So, when the Scripture says, "In the six month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David,"¹ it follows that Joseph was then her real husband.

Contrary, however, to former opinion, as held since the day of St. Jerome, it is now definitely clear that during this entire year of the Espousal a strict virginity was obligatory.²

¹ Luke 1:26-27.

² Filas, *The Man Nearest to Christ*, p. 77. This author also contests St. Jerome's assumption that Joseph learned of Mary's motherhood from any external signs; see pp. 78-81. The fact of Mary's motherhood was doubtless revealed to him in due time by Mary's closest intimate, her mother, with whom at that period she was staying.

From Scripture itself we know that the Mystery of the Annunciation took place no later than three months previous to the public marriage. The fact is plain from St. Luke's statement that Mary returned from her visit to Elizabeth after three months had elapsed. The year of the Espousal apparently was drawing to its close and she hastened back to her mother's home.

It was the Eternal Father's will that His Only Begotten Son should be born of a virgin mother—but of a *married* virgin, that so the Mystery of the Incarnation might be duly guarded. Mary, too, would need the solace and help of her virginal spouse, not in the ordinary necessities of life alone, but also in the great trials that were to come upon her and the Child.

The union of Joseph and Mary, as husband and wife, was evidently pledged to be purely virginal. A silent inspiration must have guided them both, that “from a virginal marriage might be born a Virginal Son.”³

Little though the divine plans were known to Joseph, in the Providence of God his marriage and his perpetual virginity both had as their purpose the birth of the God-man, though the very contrary seemed even to Mary herself implied in it. “How shall this be done, because I know not man?” was equivalent on her part to asking: “How can I become the Mother of the Messiah when I am pledged to an inviolable virginity?” To this the angel replied that through the virtue of the Holy Spirit would take place miraculously, without intervention of man, the Virginal Conception of Christ. “And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”⁴ What seemingly had made impossible

³ St. Jerome, *Contr. Helv.*, 14.

⁴ Luke 1:34, 35.

her Motherhood of God was precisely the condition of its realization.

But now that the Incarnation had been divinely wrought and God abode within her flesh, she did not feel free to divulge this Secret of the King—even to her own spouse, until the will of God should have been made manifest to her.

Already God Himself had miraculously revealed the secret to Elizabeth without word from Mary. In His own time He could make it known to Joseph, whether by herself, or in any other way He pleased. It was for her to pray and wait, distressing though this silence must become. God understood. Was she not in His hands! So Mary's will remained resigned to His, however great the suffering might be for her and for her virginal spouse.

As for Joseph, he was to undergo this ordeal so that the fact of the Divine Incarnation might be made most indubitable to all the world, while his own virtue in turn would shine out the more resplendently.

Gold is refined by fire and only so attains its highest purity and splendor.

Being a "just man," as the Holy Spirit vouches, Joseph obviously would allow no faintest shadow of suspicion ever to fall on Mary, even in the most hidden recesses of his own heart. Like gossamer suspended in the air his judgment was ever ready to be stirred and swayed by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God. Selfish considerations could have no part in his deliberation.

How long the inscrutable counsels of God permitted this silent, agonizing suffering for husband and wife is not known precisely. But most fruitful it was to be for

them and all the world, attesting still further, to all future generations, by a new special angelic intervention, the truth of the Virginal Conception.

The trial may have been short as it was intense. Certainly it was far greater than that of Abraham bidden to sacrifice his son Isaac. For what could be the love of a thousand fathers compared to the love of Joseph for Mary! God Himself loved her more than He loved all the world of angels and of saints besides, and to Joseph He had given a heart capable of an affection great, refined, and ardent enough to be worthy of her.

If God rewarded Abraham by making him the father of offspring numberless as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens, how magnificent was to be His reward for Joseph, to whom at this very moment He was about to commit, solemnly and formally, the Virgin Mother of His Incarnate Son, and to whom thereafter, through future years, were to be entrusted all the millions of the faithful, placed under his protecting care as Patron of the Universal Church.

Overcome, perhaps, by the natural violence of his mental struggle and the exhausting anguish of his faithful heart, Joseph had sunk at last into a blessed sleep. Then it was that God's angel came and announced to him the secret which Mary had so delicately kept sealed within her heart.

The simple facts are told us as they could be gleaned from Mary's own lips or from those who had heard them from her virgin spouse. They are recorded by the Apostle-Evangelist, St. Matthew, who could readily have had access to the witnesses.

"Now the generation of Christ was in this wise," he begins. "Whereas His mother Mary was espoused to

Joseph, before they came together, she was found with Child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: 'Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.' Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: 'Behold a virgin shall be with Child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.'"⁵

The prophecy of Isaias referred to here was familiar to Joseph. But what astonishment for him to learn that the Virgin predicted centuries ago, as the Mother of the future Messias, was in very truth his own Immaculate Bride! What a deep sense of unworthiness arose in his profoundly humble soul! Yet a scion of David's royal line was Joseph, the noblest of his house, gentle in word, firm in strength and courage, and prompt above all in action when God's will was made known to him.

"And Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife."⁶

What tears of gladness in Mary's eyes, what light of understanding in her glance, as with profoundest worship Joseph bowed and silently adored her God and

⁵ Matt. 1:18-23.

⁶ Ibid. 24.

his—the same Who in the years gone by had spoken in lightnings and in thunder upon Sinai, but now was tabernacled in a Maiden's breast!

All bitterness was turned to sweet, all darkness into splendor.

So now, without delay, the marriage ceremony could be held.

"Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land."⁷

Now from her mother's embrace was the bride brought into the home of her betrothed. Now, with lighted lamps and sprays of myrtle in their hands, the white-clad maidens led the way, while harp and flute and song merrily ushered the Holy Pair into the home prepared for them. But in Joseph's heart it was the Holy Spirit Who sang the mystic bridal song.

Likest to Mary was Joseph, yet different. Happily, together they blended into one perfect harmony, with Jesus in their midst. And so was reflected on earth, as never before, the Mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity.

With Mary and Jesus, Joseph too belongs to the Hierarchy of the Incarnation. Into that mystic circle, suffused with the splendors of Divinity, none other can enter: not Seraph nor Saint, not Martyr nor Apostle, not Patriarch nor Prophet. It is the Order of the Hypostatic Union, reserved alone for Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

⁷ Cant. 2:10-12.

4

THE EXPECTATION

SAFE in the care of her virginal spouse, surrounded by his reverent love, solicitously provided for by him, Mary might now go in joy about her wifely duties, at the same time worshipfully preparing for the great day when she should look for the first time on the face of her Creator, made her Child.

What joy when the day's tasks were done, to have near her in Joseph a soul to whom she could communicate her own high thoughts and longings, and who in turn could share the same with her. United in the love of Christ, that love of Mary and Joseph for each other was constantly to grow. Devotion to Christ would continue to lend sacredness, through all future centuries, to the nuptial bond of every Christian union.

The center of Mary's life was Christ. In all things she knew but the lowly yielding of her entire being to the will of that secret Life within her. Brain, heart, members, all gave of their best that Christ might be magnified thereby in the perfect surrender of creature to Creator.

"Now, also shall Christ be magnified in my body," Mary might have said, in anticipation of the great Apostle. "For me to live is Christ."¹

¹ Phil. 1:20, 21.

Obedience to God's will had made of Mary His perfect instrument, and the knowledge of this was one of her most exquisite joys. Because of the perfection of that submission to God's good pleasure, the divine Voice within her broke in perpetual music across the silence of her soul, and guided her unerringly in the holy government of her life for the best interests of her Incarnate God.

Each faculty of her soul, each affection of her heart, stainless and unblemished, was lifted as a crystal cup for the still fuller outpourings of perfections, and in its depth there lay the radiant image of her God.

Day by day drew near that great event which the Prophets had foretold, and for which the nations longed with eager expectation: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Savior."²

The life of Mary was enfolded in Christ, and Christ was embodied in her. In Him she moved and lived and had her being. Her silence was pregnant with the Word of God. She was the embodied Speech of the Eternal, expressing His every wish in her thoughts and words and actions. To the fine ear of the spiritual soul she was the systole and diastole of the love of the Divine Heart.

But sweetness was combined in her with strength. As, from time to time, the awful might and majesty of God drew close to Mary's soul, and compassed it about, flesh and blood must have trembled at the nearness of the Infinite: "This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of Heaven."³ When grace assumed the form of

² Is. 45:8.

³ Gen. 28:17.

a tempest of spiritual elements, and shook and swayed and bowed that soul like a lily before the storm—then, indeed, must the tiny hand of the Divine Babe have been slipped between Mary's heart and the hand of the Mighty Majesty of God to gently still her quivering spirit: "My heart was troubled for fear of Thy Majesty."⁴ But never for a moment was her confidence to be shaken or her trust to be disturbed: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."⁵

Ah, the contracting power of that Baby-hand to wake the imprisoned Mother-love and lead it victorious athwart the trembling flesh—that love, strong with the superhuman strength of its sublime destiny, strong with the appealing helplessness of its heavenly Burden, strong with its solemn *Credo* in the Unborn Word. At the depth of Mary's soul remained perpetually the peace of God, as her body was chaliceing His Word.

"The Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness."⁶

We question sometimes, when God transmutes our pain into sudden joy, and leads us into His garden of delights, whether, indeed, pain is not the sweetest road to His Heart, the most joyous because the most worthy and ingratiating. It is a royal road, whereon the feet of princes may tread in the footsteps of the King. The "brightness" which the Father infused into Mary's troubled spirit bore it safely through the haunting shadows of the night and the human terrors of the dark unknown which her untried feet must tread, until at last they would bring her to face the double anguish, bravely and unfaintingly, beneath the outstretched arms of the Cru-

⁴ Esther 15:16.

⁵ Job 13:15.

⁶ Is. 58:11.

cified. He orders all things sweetly in His Wisdom: pain and anguish, joy and love.

How incalculably precious to God must have been Mary's physical as well as spiritual safety. The souls of the saints, as Faber says, are "haunted souls," filled with the mysterious experiences of the spiritual world. There is a rapture wherein the flesh itself seems almost to become transformed into the spiritual texture of the soul—as though the luminous presence of God imparted to it a faint infusion of the glorified state, to enable it to be subjected in safety to His more intimate manifestations. With what tenderly solicitous care, then, must not God have spiritualized Mary's body to bear the long exhausting drain upon it from her "haunted soul"!

Did she not live in one long union with God, which glorified every humble deed of her hand, every path she trod, every thought and word, every motion of her love-laden heart? So keyed in her was the frail, mortal flesh that it answered perfectly and sweetly to all the harmonious operations of the Most High—the flesh that harbored God and should not know corruption, the flesh whereof the Lord of all had taken flesh.

And now drew near the time of His coming: "For yet a little while and a very little while, and He that is to come, will come, and will not delay."⁷

How wistfully, and yet with what unconquerable longing, did Mary fix her eyes upon that hour, when she was to behold at last the Word made flesh. There would be the end of the most intimate, the most secret, what might seem the most divinely wonderful, of all her joys. But in its place was to succeed another, the very thought of which thrilled her soul with dreams of

⁷ Heb. 10:37.

blissful possession—the joy wherein her Mother-love and worship might at last satiate themselves on the supreme Object of her desire.

Was it joy or pain, that she must share her Beloved with all the wide world, with friend and foe, with the loving and the unloving? Never again would He be so entirely hers.

She must indeed deliver Him to the world, she who with more than a Mother's passionate love would shield Him, her Son and God, from the cold glance of an indifferent eye, the touch of a careless hand.

And yet, as her arms closed in dreams about the tender form of the Divine Babe resting in the warmth of her breast, her Mother-love overflowed into the wide boundless world of His, as a river flows into the fullness of the sea, and was lost in its far-reaching tides that ebb and flow with strong enticements about the hearts of men.

“O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!”⁸

With all her race Mary indeed had thirsted for the coming of the Messiah; and during those quite secluded years, in the shadowy glory of the Temple, her soul had fed upon the golden promises of the Sacred Books and the secret visions of their fulfilment. She longed and suffered with her race. Now, as the time drew near, the old eager longing conquered the deep sweet absorption of her hidden joy, and she craved to relinquish it that she might enter into the boundless joy of God's supreme will in this long-awaited and crowning gift of the Redeemer made visible among men. And so,

⁸ Ps. 62:2.

as day by day her spirit rose upon the faint, pure wings of morning, it carried with it the heartfelt cry of her burdened race:

"O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down!"⁹

In union with her Divine Son her soul was straitened until, by the bestowal upon the world of the Fruit of her immaculate maternity, she might still further accomplish her share in the redemption of mankind.

Then, with the tender glory of her Divine Motherhood flashing in her eyes, Mary turned towards the hills of Judah, as she whispered through the breaking day:

"Out of Sion the loveliness of His beauty. God shall come manifestly: our God shall come, and shall not keep silence."¹⁰

⁹ Is. 64:1.

¹⁰ Ps. 49:2-3.

5

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

THE time of Mary's Expectation was not without sore trial. Hardly had the angel's message been brought to her and the Word become incarnate within her, than she thought of Joseph. On God alone it depended to make known to him her Secret of the King. It was not for her to reveal.

Her visit to Elizabeth had providentially removed her from Nazareth. But soon after her return some four months would have expired since the great event of the Annunciation. With these, too, the year of her espousal was drawing to a close. Her difficulties deepened. Yet once more God intervened for her and through an angel solved Joseph's perplexity.

But with the public marriage celebrated, it was Joseph's duty now to safeguard Mary's honor and the legitimacy of her Divine Child. God indeed would provide, but man, too, must do his part. For a third time, Heaven's aid was not wanting, for what indeed could have been more providential than the decree of Caesar Augustus, that "the whole world [meaning the Roman Empire] should be enrolled." Like a wise man Joseph must at once have used this opportunity to leave Nazareth for a length of time, though apparently only to enroll in the city of Bethlehem, as the law required.

Not more than about five months remained, from the

date of the public marriage, before the expected birth of the Divine Child. What mercy would the Nazarenes show to Mary should suspicion be aroused at this? Evidently Joseph could not now remain in Nazareth. He must live for a length of time where both he and his newly wedded wife could be unknown. Above all, he must leave at once.

No slightest Scripture warrant exists for the almost invariable supposition that the journey to Bethlehem took place immediately before the birth of Christ. Since the law of enrollment allowed abundant time, why should Joseph hazard the life of Mary on so difficult and tortuous a journey in the dangerous condition in which she would then have been? What was even a graver consideration, why should he expose both her and the Child to the slightest possibility of suspicion on the part of the Nazarenes?

All the Scripture says is that *while Joseph and Mary actually were in Bethlehem*—"when they were there"¹—Mary's days were accomplished that she should be delivered. Joseph was of all men no procrastinator. He was highly prudent no less than prompt and sure in action. With the greatest treasures of all the world entrusted to his single care, he would run no hazards, whatever might be the difficulties for him to gain a livelihood for Mary and himself. For the rest, God once more would provide.

Joseph's confidence in God and his abandonment to the Divine Will were surpassed only by those of Mary herself.

Arriving at Bethlehem, Joseph may have found some lowly home where he could sufficiently support Mary

¹ Luke 2:6. Cf. Filas, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.

and himself by simple carpentry. When Mary's time was come, he naturally would seek for better accommodation in the small caravansary inn. And when he found this occupied and the need had become extreme, there was but one other refuge left that at least provided the necessary room and privacy. It was the stable.

Palistinian caves, whose deep hollows could be used as a shelter for cattle or beasts of burden, often had a crude wooden shed for an entrance. It was such a place, then unused, which Joseph found, festooned with dusty cobwebs, with stained straw and broken litter on the floor. There, to one side, stood an empty manger. Filled with some dried grasses from the narrow stable loft and covered with a white sheet gently spread by Mary's immaculate hands, this could readily be used for a crib. Then the manger-throne was ready for the coming of the King of kings.

Here is the story entire, as the Scripture tells it. The rest our reasoning has sought to supply as best it could:

And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child.

And it came to pass, that *when they were there*, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.²

² Luke 2:1-7.

It was night when the Divine Child was born. This we know from the appearance of the angel host to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks on the starlit hills.

In silence and secrecy God works stupendous wonders. The hearts of men sleep on, but angels fold their wings in worship where in the stable of Bethlehem the Almighty Word of God made flesh is silently born into this world. Heaven pauses in wonder, and Mary kneels in adoration before her God Who has become her Son.

Miraculously, inviolately, without the pain and throes of childbirth, the ever-maiden Mother had brought into the world her Divine Child. As a Virgin she had conceived Him by the Virtue of the Holy Ghost, as a Virgin she had borne Him by the Might of the Most High, to Whom all things are possible. Now, then, was fulfilled the "sign" which centuries ago the Prophet Isaias had predicted should be given to the House of David: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son."³

Virginal was to be the conception and virginal the birth of Christ; and He should be called "Emmanuel," the Prophet added—a word interpreted by the Evangelist as meaning "God with us," and thus expressing the divine nature of the future Messiah.⁴

Most beautifully Ezechiel had typified Mary, in the miraculous Virginal Birth of the Savior, by that closed gate through which the Lord should pass, and yet which should not be opened.⁵ "A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up," the Fathers were to call her in the words of the Sacred Text.⁶ At one with the universal Church, unanimously they proclaim her a Virgin in her Child's

³ Is. 7:14.

⁴ Matt. 1:23.

⁵ Ez. 44:2.

⁶ Cant. 4:12.

conception, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin forever after.

Like light through the purest of crystals did the Savior pass through the inviolate body of Mary, even as His own glorified Body was thereafter to go forth through the sealed stone of His tomb. But only the former action can be considered miraculous, since to pass through solid substance is the natural property of the glorified body. Mighty indeed are the works of God and unsearchable His ways.

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger."

There we behold her, prostrate in adoration. Who knows what deep insight into the mysteries of God is granted her in that unspeakable rapture of heavenly contemplation as before her lies the Divine Babe, in the light of the lantern placed at her side by Joseph.

In those features she glimpses, with an ecstasy of joy, the long-dreamed-of likeness of herself. But in that Baby breast, as in the placid waters of a tiny lake, she knows are mirrored all the marvels and the glories of the Godhead. God of God, Light of light, true God of true God, the living and substantial Image of the Father—such, and no less, is the Babe before her—yet flesh of her flesh, substance of her substance.

Surcharged with the divine grace of her Motherhood, Mary's keen intelligence reaches out upon the inspiration of adoring love, and is steeped in the wonders of the Godhead, so simple, yet inscrutable. For "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in many waters: and Thy footsteps shall not be known."⁷ One hardly dares draw

⁷ Ps. 76:20.

near with reverent, bated breath, to catch the glorious reflection of those shining waters upon Mary's rapt, transfigured face.

Her first deep adoration done, Mary folds to her breast the Son of her virginal heart, holding Him to herself, with all the eager love and sacred thrill of the most perfect human motherhood.

Joseph has stirred in the shadow of the cave and, blinded by the beauty of the vision, he casts himself before his God at Mary's breast. The little hands are tenderly held out to him, and with all the love of fatherhood he prints on them his kisses and moistens them with tears of joy.

But for us, too, Christ has come. He is in our midst, the long desired, the eagerly expected: Emmanuel, "God with us." Men know Him not as yet, but a new life is about to pulse through the world: an ampler, stronger, resuscitating life of grace, in which the souls of men are to be divinely re-created. Men are at last to know God as He has never before been known: not merely intimately, personally, but made evident to their sense. They are to touch and see and hear Him. They are to lean upon His breast and minister to His wants, to question and adore. They are to share His triumphs and ignominies, to love or despise, abandon or defend Him. The Son of God has come into our midst!

How different these surroundings of the Savior's Birth from anything that Joseph and Mary could possibly have anticipated in their eager expectation of His coming.

Busily had Mary's hands made every preparation. Lovingly the soft white linen had been spun and laid away with aromatic spices between its immaculate folds.

The little crib was somewhere standing ready, made by Joseph with the best of skill and the most ardent devotion. Sweetly was the Divine Guest to be welcomed to all the affection and comfort which their home, however humble, could afford.

But not such was God's Providence. There was in store for Mary and Joseph a mystery of divine disappointment, which would be most blessed in its results for the whole world, and not least of all for these two devoted souls themselves, teaching them to understand more intimately the ways of God, and to rise unto still greater heights of holiness and love, with complete relinquishment of themselves into the hands of God. There was many another mystery of divine disappointment, humanly incomprehensible, awaiting them in the future.

Not into the simple comforts of a home, however humble, was Jesus to be born, but amid the cold and poverty and utter destitution of a dark forsaken stable, where a manger would be His crib, and the straw that Joseph's hands could gather would form His royal bedding. Surely a welcome such as God alone could have thought of preparing for the coming into the world of His Only-Begotten Son, to teach mankind the nothingness of earthly pomp and riches. There, then, in the embrace of the little Nazarene Maiden lies the Incarnate Power of the Most High. All Heaven is in her arms, folded to her heart, as close to herself as she holds the tiny Body of that Babe; God and Man; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all substantially united within the infant breast of Mary's Child.

"What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?

“For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away:
Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my
portion forever.”⁸

⁸ Ps. 72:25-26.

6

THE INFANT GOD

HOW beautiful, how adorable the newborn Christ is in His very weakness and helplessness, committed entirely to the hands and the heart of the little Maiden Mary. He the Immeasurable, the Imponderable Light, is made visible to human eyes. Here He lies, sensible to us in the touch of the flesh, the sound of the voice, the cry of human pain, the vision of His loveliness. We lift Him in our trembling arms—the yielding little body, the limbs grown limp with sleep—and we stagger under the weight. Our arms grow weak and almost break beneath the wonder and sweetness of the heavenly burden. . . . For lo! It is our God.

In a drop of dew the glory of the sky may be reflected, but in the breast of that tiny Babe is contained substantially all the Majesty of God.

Invisibly around that crib are adoring angel legions, but without, above the grassy hillsides, the skies grow suddenly luminous where shepherds watch their flocks. And behold an angel of the Lord stands by them, and the brightness of God shines round about them, and a great fear takes hold on them. They cast themselves upon their faces.

“Fear not,” the angel voice is heard to say, “for, be-

hold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you, in the city of David, a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."

With the angel appears a whole multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

Then, slowly, the glory fades in the skies and from the hills the echoes die away. Filled with wonderment the shepherds rise from where they have cast themselves on the ground, and looking at one another exclaim: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shown to us."¹ Coming with haste they find Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger.

What could have been more fitting than that the first chosen to appear before Christ should be the humble, faithful shepherds? Christ Himself, in His human nature, was descended from the house of David, the shepherd lad of Bethlehem, who on those selfsame hills had fed his father's flocks. It was David, who with staff and sling and five smooth pebbles stowed in his shepherd scrip, had fearlessly gone out to battle with the Philistine Goliath, the man from Geth, clad in armor of war, with sword and spear and shield, representing the pride and might and panoply of worldly power which Christ would conquer on the bloody Cross.

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield," were the words David hurled at the giant of brass and steel, "but I come to thee in the name

¹ Luke 2:8-15.

of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied."²

It was that God Who had come in human form to assume the role of the Good Shepherd, Whom His sheep would know and follow, and Who would seek afar those that had strayed from the fold. "I am the Good Shepherd," He would say, "and I know mine, and mine know Me. . . . And I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."³

It was the same Son of man, here wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, Who should come in glory, and all the angels with Him, to sit on the seat of His Majesty. "And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right side, but the goats on His left."⁴

Knowing all this we understand why precisely to the shepherds His message was sent and why His Heart went out to them as they offered simple homage and presented humble gifts.

Children know one another best, and here is a mother who has followed her shepherd husband and has brought her little one close to the side of the Crib. Sweetly the child offers its trinket to Mary's Babe, which delightedly looks upon the happy giver, and as the little fingers close upon the trifling gift, heavenly blessings go out in return from the Heart of God. Heaven itself

² I Kings 17:45.

³ John 10:14-16.

⁴ Matt. 25:32-33.

is bestowed on us for the trifles of earth, and priceless Love in return for the little hearts we give Him.

There is a strangely disproportionate strength in the tenacious grip of baby fingers. The outer, relaxing muscles are so undeveloped; the inner, so responsive to the blind instinct to retain. So it was with the Divine Babe. That little hand was clasped for all time about the universe, and held in its rose-leaf cup the souls of men.

The muscles of Love were strong with the strength of Divinity; those of Justice weak with the weakness of humanity.

But the shepherds have departed and the Divine Babe lies locked in Mary's arms, the slumber-home of the Incarnate God. Her whole soul yearns over Him, folds itself about Him, strains Him to herself in a transport of maternal tenderness. Well she knows that precious years, seeming like flying moments, will vanish with their hidden joy; and then the storm will break across her heart. Oh the tremendous anticipative sacrifice of that Mother-love! But the little hidden body warms her heart with an excess of Divine grace and her face droops in its flower-beauty into the face upon her breast; and all is well.

The Divine Babe lies locked in Mary's arms. Back and forth she paces, watching the strange, inscrutable look which every baby wears, here doubly inscrutable in the unfathomable eyes of the Infant God. Her soul searches those mysterious depths and trembles with holy fear and purest joy. How like a prelude to the Beatific Vision those blessed moments are. Can she break the silence with the sweet witchery of a song that those

delicate eyes may close? But the veils fall, and unbidden the soft low canticle of her love breaks from the mother-heart and lays its spell upon the quivering lids:

“How beautiful art Thou, my Love, how beautiful
art Thou!
Thy eyes are dove’s eyes, besides what is hid within.”⁵

The angels catch up the burden of her lullaby where, with the weight of love, her own voice breaks and dies away. God sleeps!

Reluctantly, at last the little Form is laid within the manger bed. All is still, but Mary’s heart is restless with the restlessness of ever-watchful motherhood. Close she lies to Him, upon her rude couch, tired with the sweet weariness of mother cares and weakness. But, how fair He is. He must be cold. How helpless He lies in the strange, silent, baby-endurance that only a mother sees! The mother-heart will not be denied. She reaches out and draws Him stealthily from the cold manger into the throbbing shelter of her breast.

The Baby-lids are sealed with Mary’s kisses. The little Form, folded perchance in the soft skin of one of the shepherd’s lambs, is laid back in the humble manger. Mary is free to feast her heart in secret adoration. Her eyes linger worshipfully over the perfect features, the upturned cup of the rose-leaf palm, the rhythmic heaving of the breast. All perfect, all divinely perfect! But hear, in the silence, a sudden sigh.

The pathos, the strange incongruity of a baby’s sigh: half sigh, half sob. The sigh that struggled from the

⁵ Cant. 4:1.

Soul of Incarnate Divinity, and breaks upon the coral reef of Baby lips.

The Child has wandered in His dreams back to His Father's home. His little hands have set ajar the heavenly portal; He has leaned His golden head against the bars, and raised His wistful eyes to the splendor of The Eternal—the divinely self-willed Exile from His Father's house. His little hands reach out and sun themselves in the celestial fires of His native glory; His little face quivers in the silver sea of angelic wings; His heart throbs to the ecstasy of the heavenly choirs. He seeks His Father's eyes . . . and oh, the great, living, palpitating silence that falls upon that interchange of love. . . .

Then—a deep loneliness folds itself about the little Heart. The crimson sign of the Cross traces itself upon His breast; the symbols of the Passion silently form upon the hands and feet and head and side; and pitifully the little Figure turns from His Father's home.

Through the bars of sleep He breaks with a sobbing sigh upon His lips.

Well may the watchful mother wonder as on the waking lips of her Child now appears a radiant smile. With joy the Divine Victim embraces the saving mission for which He has come into this world: to suffer and to die for us. And in His Heart He whispers to the Eternal Father:

"Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a Body Thou hast fitted to Me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee. . . . Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy Will, O God!"⁶

* * *

⁶ Heb. 10:5-7; Ps. 39:7-9.

The cry of the Infant Christ. How it carries upon its plaint the cry of all humanity. Again and again the echo of it breaks through the Christmas jubilations as the uplifting arms of the Cross cast their shadows athwart the golden Star of Bethlehem.

Christ loved us so insatiably, He was drawn to clothe Himself in our flesh that He might endure pain and speak to our hearts in its language for all time.

Prophetically, that Baby cry carries through the night the grief of Gethsemane. It is the tender anticipation of the cry of Agony which in all its awfulness will be heard breaking forth in the hour of dereliction upon Calvary. Now silenced in the bosom of Mary, it will at last be silenced in the bosom of the Father.

Here, indeed, Mary is for the Son of God His bed of aromatic spices, the lilies whereon He feeds. Nowhere can He find such perfect comfort as at His Mother's breast, in her immaculate arms that circle Him about like the Father's love.

How hungrily the mother watched for the dawn of the first smile upon her Baby's lips. How softly it breaks, in little tremulous dimples, and quivers in a tiny cleft of chin; and claims the melting love and tearful joy in Mary's eyes.

A thing to be prayed for, and labored for—the smile of God. A thing to bathe one's soul in. Better even than tears of sorrow, the worshipful tears of joy. Purer, more exalted, containing less of self, and more of God. That heavenly tyranny of Divine joy which grips and exalts the soul to breathless heights in the firmament of God's Beauty, and sets it fainting in the bosom of the Eternal.

“Nothing but adoration will fill a created spirit to

the brim with joy, and nothing will set flowing the spring of adoration more resistlessly than contemplation of the Beauty of God."⁷

⁷ Father Faber.

7

THE FACE OF CHRIST

SHE fell upon her face, and worshipping upon the ground, said to him: 'Whence cometh this to me?'¹ Thus, before Booz, as he came out of Bethlehem, lay the Moabitess Ruth, overwhelmed with gratitude for the favors shown her by this man.

But in the presence of the Most High, come in human form to the very same Bethlehem, the Little Maiden Mary, His handmaid and His Mother, is favored infinitely more. Her face is buried deep in the bosom of her God.

Fulfilled now are the Prophet's words: "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler of Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."²

Blessed indeed among all women is she who was chosen to be the Mother of her God. And favored among all the cities of the earth is the little town of Bethlehem, where He was to be born in time Whose heavenly Birth is "from the days of eternity." In those beautiful words the Prophet predicted the Divinity as well as the humanity of the celestial Babe Whose first human worshipper was Mary.

¹ Ruth 2:10.

² Mich. 5:2.

"Be still and see that I am God."³

Ah, it is good to worship in the bosom of God; to be, lips and eyes, so close to the Face of Christ. That is Mary's privilege before all others.

How far away now lies the dormant world. Too holy is this hour, too blinding with the glory of God, too thronged with the worship of adoring angel hosts, too hushed with the music of celestial choirs, for the cold, irreverent touch of its ungodly hand.

But how can created flesh and spirit bear the long deep ecstasy of the joy of Divine Motherhood? That indeed is an important question, and the answer is that Mary's soul is strong in joy as in suffering, and in both alike wholly subject to the Heavenly Will.

After the humanity of Christ, no human body and soul were ever made so wonderfully as those of Mary, ever adapted so exquisitely to their purpose, or privileged to enjoy in such plenitude the Divine co-operation of the Spirit of God Who overshadowed her. It was not hard, therefore, for her to attune her own purely human life to this divine relationship, which henceforth and forever would exist between herself and God.

For Mary, a new life had begun.

No soul is ever quite the same once it has looked closely upon the veiled glory of God through the medium of the strong, supernatural light of the Holy Spirit. St. Teresa is an illustrious example of the transformation wrought by the intimate Presence of Christ.

Such a soul may deteriorate. It may fluctuate with the mutability of the human will. The spirit of the world may intervene and obscure with its baleful light the beauty of that vision. Yet there it lies: a subterra-

³ Ps. 45:11.

nean lake, in whose motionless depths broods the Image of the Most High. Only the sweep of an angel's wing may be needed to awaken its spirit of healing and impart eternal life to the rescued soul.

"I have seen God face to face, and my soul has been saved,"⁴ exclaimed Jacob after wrestling with the Angel who appeared to him in the form of a man.⁵ It was God, in fact, Who strengthened Jacob in this struggle that he might have firm confidence thereafter in His aid.

And Jacob named the place Phanuel, which can be translated "the Face of God."

To have seen God, not only with the understanding, with the strong apprehension of the loving heart, but to have seen Him under the direct and super-abounding grace of the Holy Spirit, lighting up the Beauty of the face of Christ for us—that is indeed the nearest prelude to salvation which the love of the Father bestows upon favored souls to hold them fast.

What must have been, besides, to Mary the outward portrayal of the Soul of Christ! None ever saw what Mary saw in those heavenly lineaments of her Son. None could ever say with the same sublime knowledge: "I have seen God face to face."

The vision of the Divine Face of Christ was to remain with Mary always: "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."⁶ Her soul should live by it and see all things in its light. It would spell for her the lessons of joy and sorrow, pain and peace. It would lead her into ever more profound depths of the Mysteries of God, and fortify her beyond power of defeat against the tragedy of the days to come.

Our soul, too, cries out for the vision to which some

⁴ Gen. 32:30.

⁵ Osee 12:4.

⁶ IV Kings 2:2.

day, pray God, it shall attain, in a manner not possible for us here below.

Only by daily living face to face with God, do we inure ourselves to the increasing weight of the cross, and learn to defy the weakness of the flesh with a growing ease which fills our timorous soul with tearful joy. We fix our eyes on the Face of Christ, and its sweetness and its power enter into and abide with us, till Christ lives in us and we in Him. Come peace, come storm, through crucifixion, and unto glory everlasting, we trust to be His, and His alone, in the bosom of God.

Like mist before the rising sun, the Face of Christ banishes the dense veils which sin and weakness of the flesh have dropped before the soul's vision. Sometimes they melt away slowly, imperceptibly, while our eyes adapt themselves unconsciously to increasing glory, till we find ourselves walking, unstartled, in the luminous Presence of the veiled Majesty of God. And again, those veils become bright with a sudden piercing luster, as though the love of God could not brook delay. We awake to the world with a smile on our lips, and all things smile back on us with the new and heavenly loveliness in which they were created; and our soul cries: "Out of Sion the loveliness of His beauty, God shall come manifestly!"⁷

That indeed was the cry of the Old Testament Psalmist, but as repeated by us it is a prophecy already verified in the coming of Christ. So may we continue to walk in the light of that heavenly Vision of God, made manifest to us under the veils of human flesh.

"My heart hath said to Thee: 'Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek.'"⁸

⁷ Ps. 49:2-3.

⁸ Ps. 26:8.

Yea, Lord, Thou knowest—we shall be able to say to Him—that my face hath sought Thee with a hunger which will not be appeased. As the flower toward the sun, so my face hath turned toward the glory of Thy countenance. I have lifted it up to Thee and Thou hast stooped to it, to touch and caress it, to breathe upon it the breath of Life and bless it with the benediction of Thy strengthening grace. Thou hast drenched it with “the dew of Heaven,” and it has known no storm too fierce to blast from it the joy of Thy countenance.

“I have found grace in Thy eyes, my Lord, Who hast comforted me, and hast spoken to my heart.”⁹

Only turn not Thy Face from me, and I shall follow Thee even unto prison and death. Except for the light of Thy countenance, I am helpless and blind. Lord, shine Thou upon me, that I may forever know but Thee, and all things in Thee.

But behind that Face of the newborn Babe in the crib is the Face foreseen by the Prophet, the Face of the Man of Sorrow. From the sight of that Face, bruised and buffeted, those lips athirst upon the cross, can we fail to draw a deep consuming zeal for souls!

“O adorable Face of Jesus!” so St. Thérèse began the Act of Consecration to the Holy Face which she composed for her novices in the Carmel, “since Thou hast deigned to choose our souls in order to give Thyself to them in a special manner, we come to consecrate these souls to Thee.

“To us, O Jesus, it seems that Thou dost say: ‘Open to Me, My sisters, My spouses, for My face is wet with the dew, and My locks with the drops of the night.’¹⁰ Our

⁹ Ruth 2:13.

¹⁰ Cf. Cant. 5:2.

souls understand Thy language of love; we wish to wipe Thy sweet Face and to console Thee for the contempt of the wicked. In their eyes Thou art still 'as it were hidden . . . they esteem Thee an object of reproach.' . . .¹¹

"From Thy adorable lips we have heard that loving plaint: 'I thirst.' We know that this thirst which consumes Thee is a thirst for love. To quench it we fain would possess an infinite love.

"Dear Spouse of our souls, if we could love with the love of all hearts, that love would be all Thine. . . . Give us, O Lord, this love, and then come to satisfy in us Thy thirst.

"But give to us souls, dear Lord. We thirst for souls! And above all we thirst for the souls of apostles and martyrs that through them we may inflame with love for Thee all poor sinners.

"O adorable Face, we shall win this grace from Thee. Unmindful of our exile 'by the rivers of Babylon,' we shall sing for Thy ears the sweetest of melodies. Yet not in a strange land will our songs be sung, for in Thee is the true home of our souls.

"O beloved Face of Jesus, while we await that eternal day when we trust to gaze on Thy infinite glory, our only desire here shall be to delight Thy Divine eyes by keeping our faces hidden, too, so that no one shall recognize us upon earth.

"Dear Jesus, Heaven for us is Thy hidden Face."

* * *

But the Face beheld by the Prophet, which has touched our deepest chords of being, now melts away,

¹¹ Cf. Is. 53:3.

and what we look upon once more is the tender Face of the Babe, peacefully asleep in the manger-crib of Bethlehem. Strange as it may seem, these two thoughts are combined in the name of the world's little Carmelite saint, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, and are the two emblems on her escutcheon of nobility in the registry of Heaven.

MOTHER AND WIFE

THE morning dawns. The Baby eyes of the Christ Child open for the first time to the glories of nature. From His Mother's arms He looks out with human vision upon the work of His eternal hands. The beauty of sky and field and wood and hill draws close to Him and thrills His heart, and the rough wind kisses His cheek as though He were not—God. The sun rests upon His face and dazzles Him till Mary folds the little Babe within the shelter of her veil, and the heaven of her eyes shuts out the Heaven of His Father which enfolds them both.

Tenderly the little Babe is laved and stroked, and then is warmed with Mary's kisses. His Divinity does not obscure from her His human loveliness.

Softly and with reverent hands she swathes the perfect limbs, and clothes the tender body, and lays His little face against her throat. Ah! the soft clinging of those tiny arms, the pressure of the tender cheek, the tender helplessness of the yielding form, and—the thought of the Divinity beneath it all that sends her soul in mute, unspeakable worship to the foot of the Eternal.

It is with His loveliness that Christ seeks to win our hearts before He conquers our intellects with His truth.

He comes to us first in all the tender, helpless fascination of a Babe. And when our whole being is inundated with the tide of overwhelming love, we suddenly see Him before us in all the majesty of Eternal Truth. Then the captivation of intellect proceeds; and He carries us from Alpine peak to Himalayan, while still beyond the ken of mortal sight rise in the heavens those cloud-encompassed pinnacles above whose crests shine forth forever the unveiled splendors of the Beatific Vision.

Does the soul tremble and quail with fear of the splendid awfulness, of the unapproachable Almightyness of God? If so, then that other vision of the little human Babe dawns once more, reassuringly, into the very altitude of spiritual vision.

How difficult, knowing her Babe was God, might it seem to have been for Mary to keep in mind His Will to be dependent upon His creature, not only for His mortal life, but for all His daily needs. Yet to Mary's mother-love all this was not so strange. It was but the word of God fulfilled in her regard. Her faith was perfect as her love, and her love was the crown of her faith. With the great dignity of her sublime Motherhood came likewise the grace she needed worthily to perform in every detail those functions, so slight in the eyes of the world, so wonderful in the sight of Heaven, which henceforth should be her hourly duty, as the Mother of God.

Tenderly, therefore, with a mother's sweetest care and intuition, Mary gathers the Babe in her arms and hushes His cries against her breast. The little mouth quivers into silence with the comfort of the warm sweet draught, and side by side with the mother-joy, in Mary dawns the

knowledge that every drop is nourishing that tiny body for the awful sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

If only she could shield Him ever in the warmth and shelter of her loving arms. Yet, no! It may not be. He has His mission to fulfill even to the *consummatum est*. Higher and higher, from the abyss of her noble heart, rises the tide of Mary's heroism in sublime correspondence with the Divine decree, until the great wave crests, and trembles, and breaks lovingly with the heaving breast of the Infant God.

Joseph, too, is to have his own high share in the sufferings of Jesus and of Mary. That is the inevitable price of his high privilege of nearness to the Redeemer of mankind. Supernatural understandings pass from Mary's eyes to his. Well may those loving hearts tremble with apprehension, perfectly conformed though they are to the Will of God, when they remember the Prophecies foretelling the Man of Sorrows, Whose Face shall be hidden and despised. But beneath their eyes the Babe now rests content, while the blended love of Mary and of Joseph broods above Him in the holy shadow of the Omnipotent.

* * *

From the stable to the modest home in Bethlehem the journey was safely made. Rumors of the angels' song on the lonely hills and of the shepherds' worship at the manger-cradle apparently did not reach the villagers, or else they did not associate them with Mary and her Child. So, quickly the days slipped by, centered in the sweet, pure light of the Infant life.

Mary may have struggled at times against the strange impression that possesses one under long periods of joy,

as if it were all a dream from which she shall be rudely awakened. Did Joseph surprise her, in holy moments, with a soft, perplexed smile upon her face, struggling with spiritual visions that hover upon the fringe of joy?

What a mystery it all is, her divine maternity, in the light of her unconquerable humility. That the Messiah should come; that He should appear clothed in flesh and blood as had been promised and prophesied, all this she firmly believed, for her faith was ever ardent and pure. But what a mystery, that out of all the daughters of Israel, the fair and the noble, the powerful, the saintly and the royal of spirit, she should be the one chosen for this sublime lot. The sweet eyes droop, full of tender tears, to the Baby face, and all her wonder is resolved in love.

But there is much more for her to do. The hours of Mary's day are spent in the full and perfect performance of her domestic duties. Nor is it difficult for her to combine them all into one celestial harmony of prayer and contemplation that ceaselessly delights the Heart of God. Her husband's needs must be cared for as well as those of her Child, and the thought of Joseph is treasured in her heart with all the tenderness of the deepest and holiest wifely affection. Does he not hold toward her, in the outward actions of her day, the place of her Invisible Spouse, the Holy Spirit, and is he not for the Babe at her breast the protecting shadow of His Eternal Father?

So the long day passes, until with loving heart and eager hand the evening meal is prepared. Then, as the sun is sinking in the West, she takes the Child up from His crib and watches with Him for the return of her beloved spouse from the labors of the day.

The steps of Joseph hasten as the lovely vision breaks upon his view. For there, in the doorway is Mary standing, with the form of the Babe outlined beneath the shelter of her veil.

With reverence Joseph looks into the face of the little Maid, so truly his lawful wife, and at once eagerly questions her: "The Child?" With that smile of ineffable tenderness and divinest joy which ever gathers upon her lips at mention of her Babe, Mary smiles on him and lifts the veil for Joseph's hungry eyes.

Is it not his Child, too? For in no mere adoptive sense was Jesus given him, but within his own virginal marriage with Mary, intended by God for this one purpose: that therein might be conceived of her by the Holy Ghost the Incarnate Word of God. Every right and duty of the most perfect parenthood are his, and every affection of his heart answers to this demand. His fatherhood is only the more sublime in that it is purely virginal. Long and lovingly he looks upon the Child.

That vision is ever fresh, ever new, ever ecstatic to the holy souls of Mary and Joseph. When we seek the light of God's countenance in moments of rest and leisure, do we not always find it restful and adorable? How difficult then to withdraw our gaze once more into the shadows and darkness of material things! . . . May Mary's hand, some day, lift for us the shimmering, impalpable veil of faith, from the full splendor of the Beatific Vision.

As night falls and Joseph still keeps faithful vigil near the Mother and her sleeping Child, his great heart at times grows heavy with the pain and burden of his love, till his eyes overflow. In mute supplication he raises them to the throne of Yahweh in the might of

whose arm alone is strength and refuge. He has no wish, no will but God's. He trusts blindly and with unshakable faith in the guidance of the Almighty Father. His soul is ever in an attitude of sleepless attention to the voice of God: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And in his heart he knows that his cherished ones are safe, for beneath his own weak strength are "the everlasting arms."

Softly rising, he lays his hand upon the bowed head of his spouse, and quickly Mary looks up into his face with her own sweet confiding smile. She reaches out her hand to him, and together they kneel by the side of the tiny form reposing in the cradle, their God and their Creator.

There, as they feed their souls upon the beauty of that Babe, their hearts are drawn closer to each other in resistless sympathy, and when at last by mutual impulse they look into each other's eyes, it is with that perfect understanding of the souls of the elect united in the holy bonds of purest love of God.

Here Heaven has descended to earth. God has found His perfect worshipers. Though the Baby lids are closed, the Divine Heart feeds with delight "among the lilies."

9

THE CIRCUMCISION

EIGHT days after birth, according to the Mosaic Dispensation, followed the Circumcision of the Christ Child. It was a ceremony that might take place in any private dwelling, as well as in the synagogue, and at that period was usually performed by the head of the family.

The significance of corporal circumcision was to indicate the need of a purification of the heart. At the same time the child became a member of the people of God.

Although not subject to this prescription, Christ willingly submitted to it that so He might emphasize the sanctity of the Old Law, give an example of humility and obedience, and make evident from the first the price at which our Redemption would be purchased. Had He not come to take upon Himself the sins of all the world? In the strong words of the Apostle, was He not to become sin itself for us, that by His stripes we might be healed?

Moreover, Christ's capability of suffering in His human flesh was at once made manifest in this Mystery of His love, wherein the first drops of the Divine Blood were shed. It was the red dawning reflected in the morning sky of His Infancy, presaging a bloody consummation for the day that was to end with the tragedy of Calvary.

With full consciousness of all that was passing on about Him, the Incarnate Word wished to feel, as no other ever could, the actual realization of infant helplessness in its first experience of acute suffering, and to undergo human nature's inevitable shrinking from pain. Followed the quick agony of the delicate, sensitive nerves; the sudden contraction of the heart; and withal the instant lifting of the human soul to the Eternal Father. Such are the circumstances of the Mystery. But over all and through it, there is the victorious submission of the human will to the Divine, and the solemn breaking of holy joy across the portals of the great sacrifice.

"And after eight days were accomplished," St. Luke says, "that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called *Jesus*, which was called by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb."¹

Note well the stress placed on that Sacred Name.

Already in the Mystery of the Annunciation the Divine Name has been made known to Mary by which she should call her Child. "Behold," the angel said, "thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; *and thou shalt call His name Jesus.*"²

On Joseph no less the obligation of conferring the same sacred Name was placed, at the very moment when the Incarnation was revealed to him and he was bidden to take into his home Mary his wife: "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son: *and thou shalt call His name Jesus.*"³

The giving of a name was a parental privilege and duty. The angel's command to Joseph gives clearest

¹ Luke 2:21.

² Luke 1:31.

³ Matt. 1:20-21.

evidence that he possessed parental rights in common with Mary. In both instances identical words are used. Joseph, therefore, was to be "Father" of Jesus, not carnally indeed, but spiritually and in all reality. Of all paternities, excepting that of the Eternal Father, his was the most sublime precisely because of the fact that it was virginal.

There is but one Virginal Father, St. Augustine beautifully says, as there is but one Virginal Mother. And the bond of love between these two is the Holy Ghost. Nor does the great Doctor of the Church tire of impressing on us the truth that Joseph is all the more father of Jesus in that he is father, not according to the flesh, but in a mystic sense, spiritually and virginally.

Joseph's paternity was regarded in four ways:

In the eyes of the law, he was the rightful legal father of Jesus as he was the legal husband of Mary, his wife. It was a correct view.

In the eyes of his townsmen, unacquainted with the secret of the Holy Ghost, he was simply the father of Christ: "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"⁴ This, of course, was incorrect. It shows how carefully the virginal conception of Mary had been guarded by Joseph from all suspicion.

In the eyes of Mary and of Jesus, he was the shadow and created image of the Eternal Father, Whose Divine Authority was made visible to them through the fatherhood of Joseph. God's Paternity found in him its earthly representative, and according to this high prerogative they honored him.

Lastly, in the eyes of the Most Blessed Trinity, he

⁴ John 6:42.

was the sole, authoritatively constituted and divinely recognized head of the Holy Family. Not to Jesus, not to Mary, but to Joseph alone were sent from the Throne of God the celestial messages which revealed the Divine Will concerning the measures to be taken for the safety of his Family. Thus it was to Joseph that the angel appeared and said: "Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee."⁵

In a natural way it was the duty of Joseph to provide for the Divine Child, to feed and clothe Him, and no less to save Him from His enemies. Also, in his own distinctive way, he was to take an active part in the work of the Redemption, since with Mary he prepared the Divine Victim to be offered up for the sins of mankind. Hence the fitness that he should join with Mary in bestowing upon the Child that name of Jesus, meaning "Saviour." In this privilege is hidden a supreme significance.

"Son of David," the angel had hailed Joseph, thus solemnly indicating that in the virginal conception of Christ was contained, as in its germ, the fulfilment of the promises made to David.

But to realize the joy which that blessed Name gave to Jesus Himself, we must understand how for Him it summarized His entire redemptive mission here on earth. He came to save. Who could comprehend, when this Name was conferred on Him, all the oceans of sweetness and consolation it was destined to pour into the aching wounds of His creatures, the strength it would impart, the victories over sin and temptation it would secure, the power it implied to raise the fallen

⁵ Matt. 2:13.

soul from ignominy and lift up the saint to the portals of Heaven? Who would know about the endless harmonies its utterance would evoke in the heavenly choirs?

In the Divine Mind that Name rings out above the music of creation. From the clear note of the lark, the voice of the wind, the rush of the storm, the thunder of the waves, the whisper of the forest, on through all the wondrous gamut of the harpstrings of the soul of man and the celestial choirings, the sweet Name of Jesus trembles with its potent spell and ever-deepening revelations of Eternal Truth. Entranced by its "nectareal fragrancancy" the poet exclaims:

Sweet name, in Thy each syllable
A thousand blest Arabias dwell!⁶

To him who listens at the heart of things, and whose soul by God's gift is filled with the crystal light of faith, the potency of that Name will be made still more clear: "In the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth."⁷

There is no mistake from the first as to the future division among men. There will be those who accept and those who reject all that is implied in that sacred name of Jesus, "Saviour." No one, of course, who in good faith lives according to the light that is granted him will ever be lost. But the struggle between light and darkness still goes on. Vividly it is summed up by St. John in regard to Christ's coming into this world:

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His

⁶ Richard Crashaw, "To the Name above Every Name, the Name of Jesus."

⁷ Phil. 2:10.

own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them the power to be made the sons of God, *to them that believe in His name*, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁸

⁸ John 1:10-13.

PURIFICATION AND
PRESENTATION

THE Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple took place at one and the same time.

In the Mosaic Dispensation, a woman giving birth to a male child was considered legally unclean for forty days. She might not touch anything holy, neither might she be permitted to enter the sanctuary "until the days of her purification be fulfilled."¹

When that time had expired, according to the Book of Leviticus, she was to bring to the door of the Tabernacle of the Testimony a year old lamb as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle dove for a sin offering.

In case of poverty, "if her hand find not sufficiency," she might substitute for the lamb another turtle dove or pigeon. Her offering, then, would consist of two turtle doves or pigeons, which was precisely the offering Joseph and Mary brought, the offering of the poor. "And the priest shall pray for her, and so she shall be cleansed."²

How this ritual was carried out in the case of Mary and her Child is thus narrated by St. Luke:

¹ Lev. 12:2-4.

² Ibid. 6-8.

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord: as it is written in the law of the Lord: 'Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord': and to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons."³

To understand this rite more fully we must go back to the days of the captivity in Egypt. The Jewish firstborn was there preserved by God from the death that befell every other firstborn in Egypt during the last and most terrible of the plagues sent in punishment upon the land. "And every firstborn in the land of the Egyptians shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sitteth on his throne, even to the firstborn of the handmaid that is at the mill."⁴ Ruler and people had jointly participated in the persecution of the children of Israel, and together they were afflicted by God.

From that time on the firstborn sons of the Jews were to be considered sacred to the Lord: "Sanctify to Me every firstborn that openeth the womb among the children of Israel."⁵ But since the tribe of Levi was singled out by God to serve Him in the Temple, the firstborn of the other tribes were to be redeemed by a small payment of five shekels in lieu of temple service. Such initially was the law.

But neither purification of the mother nor presentation of the firstborn were laws that could apply to Mary and her Child. Uncleanness, legal or otherwise, could not so much as be mentioned in connection with Mary,

³ Luke 2:22-24.

⁴ Ex. 11:5.

⁵ Ibid. 13:2.

while Christ was Himself the "High Priest and Temple of the New Law."⁶

For nine months Mary housed within her breast the God of Sion: "Wisdom hath built herself a house."⁷ She was the chosen dwelling place of Divine Wisdom, the Word Incarnate. Nine months her virginal body had been the marvelous tabernacle of the Most High, where dwelt the mighty Trinity in mystic unity within her stainless soul, grace upon grace steeping and enriching it with beauty and casting about it the glory of the Uncreated Light.

She who by the law, misapplied in her case, might not touch any holy thing was even now holding to her heart Infinite Purity and Holiness Itself. She who might not be permitted to enter the Temple gates had brought into the world by an ineffable and miraculous childbirth the Master of the Temple. That Temple from which she was excluded was not more holy in all the splendor of its worship than the Cave of Bethlehem where with Joseph and the shepherds she had knelt before the Crib of Christ in the midst of adoring angels.

Under the garment of her imputed "uncleanness," the Immaculate Virgin Mother remained silent. The respect of her fellow beings and the honor of her Divine Son were justly dear to her soul, and yet the real glory of her Divine Maternity would even in the future be denied her in the hearts of many of her own race. For all this, no word of her own exaltation at the hand of God, no echo of her *Magnificat*, would break the portentous silence of her lips.

Mary's humiliation, in the shadow of which she

⁶ Father Maas, S.J.

⁷ Prov. 9:1.

walked the streets of Jerusalem, was really not regarded by herself at all, but only for her Child.

He the All Holy; she the all pure.

It pertains to the glory of her Divine Son, what is a triple article of Faith, that Mary remained a virgin in the conception of Christ, in the birth of Christ, and thereafter until her death. In the words of Ezechiel, already quoted, she was that sealed gate of the Lord God of Israel which was forever to remain unopened.⁸ She herself had indicated clearly her intent of perpetual virginity when to the Angel of the Annunciation she replied: "How shall this be done because I know not man?"⁹

Nothing could be more foreign to the Christian mind than even the whisper of a suggestion that other children in the flesh could have been born to Mary. The Gospel expression, "brethren of Christ," implied no more in Hebrew than with us the word "relations." The simple reason is that no Hebrew word existed that could have been used as the equivalent of our English word "cousins." Instead, the expressions "brothers" and "sisters" were employed in a larger sense. In perfect illustration of this, James the Less is named "the brother of the Lord," yet we definitely know him to have been the son of Cleophas and another Mary.

Some take objection from the Scripture reference to Joseph regarding his marital virginity with Mary, where we read: "He knew her not until she brought forth her first-born son."¹⁰ But this, in the Hebrew idiom, carries with it no suggestion that he ever "knew her" afterwards. Again, the word "first-born," both in the Old and the New Testament, was used for any *only* child

⁸ Ez. 44:2.

⁹ Luke 1:34.

¹⁰ Matt. 1:25.

as well as for the first child of a group. Legally and in general usage an only child was always designated as "the first-born."

If Mary remained silent amid humiliation, not so the voice of her Divine Bridegroom, the Holy Spirit of God, Who by the tongues of others, inspired by Him, proclaimed aloud the glories of Mary's Divine Son, and therewithal her own exaltation.

Long had Simeon's saintly soul awaited the "consolation of Israel." Just and devout, he had received from the Holy Ghost the assurance that he should not see death before he had looked upon the face of Christ the Lord. Divinely impelled, he came into the Temple at this very moment, and taking up the Child in his aged hands, blessed God and said:

Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord,
According to Thy word in peace:

Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of
all peoples:

A light to the revelation of the Gentiles,
And the glory of Thy people Israel.¹¹

Peace, salvation, light and glory! All these blessings was that Child to bring. His "father and mother" themselves, in the Scripture words, were filled with admiration "at those things which were spoken concerning Him."¹²

It is but one of the many places where the endearing word, "father" or "parent," is applied to Joseph. *Legally*,

¹¹ Luke 2:29-32.

¹² Ibid. 2:33.

in fact, he was the father of Jesus, while Jesus Himself loved and obeyed him with all a child's tenderness.

Now, after long years of supplication from His chosen nation, the Messiah has at length arrived. Here, in the Temple built for His glory, from the throne of Mary's heart, He lays His life at the feet of His Heavenly Father. Here He offers Himself anew for His future ministry and for His own precious death on the Cross, even to the piercing of His Heart by the soldier's spear.

But Mary's heart is to be pierced as well. The eyes of Simeon, raised for the time to God as he pronounces His Messianic Canticle, fall on Joseph and Mary. Blessing them both he turns to Mary and solemnly addresses to her the words of prophecy with which God inspired him:

"Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."¹³

The future tragedy of her life, already sufficiently anticipated, was now more definitely revealed. In silence she accepted God's will, in silence she waited, her quivering lips nested, mother-wise, in the tiny palm of her Heavenly Child.

How He loved Mary! And how He loved the great-hearted Joseph who was bringing this sacrifice with her!

The Mystery of the Presentation is, in a way, St. Joseph's Calvary. He was not to live until the great Sacrifice itself should be completed, but he was here making the oblation of it in his heart. He was presenting to the Eternal Father the Son Who was loved by him as never any other son should be loved by human

¹³ Ibid. 2:34-35.

father, the Son immeasurably dear as the twofold gift of Mary and the Holy Ghost. The Scripture makes so clear his own participation in this Mystery.

But before Joseph and Mary take their departure from the Temple one more event occurred. On the majestic scene suddenly entered Anna, daughter of Phanuel, widow and prophetess. Fourscore and four years of age, by fasting and prayer, night and day, she still continued her temple-service. She, too, was moved by the Spirit of God, "and coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel."¹⁴

Both sexes now, in venerated age and holiness, as if impersonating in themselves the long centuries of waiting and expectation, have given testimony to the Lord. In a placid glow of glory the Temple Drama has reached its end. With wonderment still in their eyes Joseph and Mary faced together the return to Nazareth.

"And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city, Nazareth."¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid. 38. It is meant to be spoken in Anna's praise that after having "lived with her husband seven years from her virginity," she was not wedded to another after his death, but served God in the Temple, where women were engaged, besides the priests and levites.

¹⁵ Ibid. 39.

THE MAGI

THE Holy Family returned to Nazareth, but the Scripture does not say that they did so immediately. Joseph had to face the possible suspicion of the Nazarenes for the fact that the birth of Christ had taken place only five months after the public marriage. An alternative would have been to journey back to Bethlehem and remain there for a time.

The stay at Nazareth, which at all events followed the Mysteries of the Purification and the Presentation, may have been intended merely to make preparations there for a permanent settlement in Bethlehem.

Certain it is that from Nazareth Joseph again took the Holy Family back to Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was the city of David, and the Angel had clearly announced to Mary that her Divine Son should occupy the throne of David: "The Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His Father."¹ That of course was to be understood of the spiritual Kingdom which Christ had come to found, His Holy Church. But what would seem more natural than for Joseph to transfer in consequence his residence to Bethlehem as the ancestral city both of himself and Mary, so that Christ might begin His mission there?

¹ Luke 1:32.

At all events, Joseph allowed himself to be led entirely by the Holy Spirit, for it is here in Bethlehem that the wise men were to find the Saviour Whose star had appeared in the East. It was here also that the prophecy of Rachel bemoaning the loss of her children was to be fulfilled, little as Joseph could possibly have thought then of those things which God held in store. Soon enough all this was to take place, when following the visit of the wise men the blood of children and the tears of wailing mothers were to moisten the hill beneath which the body of Rachel lay buried.

To Bethlehem, therefore, Joseph came again, in perfect obedience to the least breathing of the Holy Spirit, and there, as God's Providence had directed, took place the Mystery of the Epiphany, or Christ's "Manifestation" to the Gentiles. They were our own representatives, these Wise Men who came from countries known, in Jerusalem, as the "East," from ancient Chaldaea, from fire-worshiping Persia, from Arabia Petraea, or from the wide plains of Mesopotamia. Scripture does not say how many they were. The number "three" might readily have been suggested by the three gifts they brought.

These brave and devout men, as St. Augustine says, were the first fruits of that Gentile Church whereof we are the harvest. From their loyal worship of the King-God-Redeemer, throned upon the arms of Mary, dates our own entry, as part of the vast Gentile world, into the heirship of God and the co-heirship with Christ. So the Church beautifully teaches in her office for the Feast of the Epiphany commemorating this wonderful event.

It is the Gentile Christmas, since now for the first

time was Christ made manifest to Gentile eyes and from Gentile hands received the threefold offering that so perfectly betokens, in Oriental symbolism, His nature and His sacred functions.

It was most fitting that a star should guide these first Gentiles in their search for Christ, since it was the Gentile Prophet Balaam who, under the inspiration of the true God, made that great prediction: "A star shall rise out of Jacob."²

The remarkable events are recorded by St. Matthew:

"When Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.'

"And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: 'In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the Prophet: "And thou Bethlehem the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the Captain That shall rule my people Israel."' "

"Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said: 'Go and diligently inquire after the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him.' Who, having heard the king, went their way.

"And behold the star which they had seen in the East,

² Num. 24:17.

went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His mother, and falling down they adored Him: and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh."³

It was the star that led them.

Unknown on earth, St. Augustine moralizes, Christ is recognized in the heavens. His greatness and His lowliness are alike made manifest in these events: His greatness in the star, His lowliness in the form of the tiny Babe.

No insignia of royalty adorn the brow of the Infant King, as the Magi kneel before Him and lay their gifts at His Mother's feet. More impressive than any imagining is the simplicity of that scene: the humble home in which the Holy Family has taken up abode; the radiant beauty of the star as it hangs luminously over it and points downward, like the finger of God, to the Mystery within; and "the Child with His Mother," and the Wise Men from afar, princes perhaps of their people, falling down to adore Him and offer their gifts.

The gifts themselves, mystical and symbolical, are variously and yet consistently interpreted. Gold, as a truly royal present, is brought to Christ as King. Frankincense is an offering befitting God alone, in Whose honor it is consumed in the flame. Hence, it symbolizes not only the Godhead of Christ Who receives it, but also His sacrificial and mediatorial function as the Great High Priest. Myrrh is for burial, and indicates the mortal nature Christ has assumed, His manhood, and thus also His function as Redeemer which

³ Matt. 2:1-11.

this nature makes possible, since it enables Him to die for us.

"Let us present gold unto the new-born Lord," Pope Gregory the Great wrote, "acknowledging His universal Kingship; let us also offer unto Him frankincense, confessing that He Who has been made manifest unto us in time, is God before time was; let us give unto Him myrrh, believing that He Who could not suffer as regards His Godhead was made capable of death as regards His manhood, which He shareth with us."⁴

The homage which we offer Him is the joyous oblation of the precious gold of our loyalty and love, the ever-ascending frankincense of our prayers, and lastly the myrrh of our mortifications and the sweet-scented little sacrifices we gladly make for Him throughout our daily life of praise, and reverence, and service. The life of the true Christian is a daily dying with Christ, that he may also live and reign with Him forever.

We need the fearlessness, persistency, and singleness of purpose which characterized these Wise Men.

Although the star ceased to shine for them, they did not give up their search. Regardless of looks of amazement which greeted their questionings at Herod's court; regardless of the jealousy of the king, the fear and suspicion of his subjects, or even the deaths which threatened them from this notorious royal murderer, they continued unshaken on their way. The light appeared again, led them onward, and at last "came and stood over where the Child was." Brought to their journey's end, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

In our own trials, we may rest assured of God's safe guidance, even though His light may seem to have

⁴ Hom. 10 in Evang.

ceased to shine. It is then that in very fact His love watches over us with greatest solicitude. We see Him not, but He will not lose sight of us, and will safely guide us in the way, provided we trustingly confide in Him and perseveringly go on in faith, and hope, and love.

Familiar with the splendors of their eastern culture and the natural glories of their native land, endowed with the brilliancy of their own intellectual attainments, looking no doubt for a purer faith than expressed in the idolatrous excesses of their own people, the Magi opened wide their souls to the light of Truth, and went forth unquestioningly, whithersoever it would lead. Nor were they daunted when it brought them to the poverty and obscurity chosen for Himself by the Lord of lords and the King of kings. At once the enlightened love of their great hearts clothed Him in the glory He seeks upon earth, and raised Him to His rightful throne.

The Magi, in humility, interpreted correctly where the Jews, blind and arrogant, were led astray. Humility is indeed a shining light, the only light to clarify the darkness of the heart and the distant horizons of the intellect, for it teaches us patience, and perseverance, and earnestness in the search of Truth.

But as the princely visitors retired at night to rest, the visage of King Herod, dark and sinister, arose before their minds. They recalled his hypocritical request, asking them to return and bring report of the new-born King, that he too might come and worship Him. What were they to do? Earnestly they prayed for light, and with firm trust in God's Providence, consigned themselves to sleep. That very night, guidance was clearly

given them, for the Scripture says: "And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country."⁵

Quickly they rose, and over the winding road that led into the open desert their line of camels sped along. Faint clouds of dust arose and then dissolved in the very silence of the night. No more was seen of them; no more was heard of them at Herod's court.

Henceforth the law of love alone would rule these Gentile hearts. In exchange for gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they carried forth with them an imperishable treasure of Divine Love, and an incense of sweetness that should rise in luminous faith and odorous worship from their loyal hearts, even in distant lands.

But neither would their memory pass away on earth, for through all future centuries the Church will look to them as the first fruits of the Gentile world, and all its generations to come shall acknowledge in the miraculous call of these few souls their own vocation to the Faith.

Rightly has Epiphany been called "the Christmas of the Gentiles."

⁵ Matt. 2:12.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

L AID away were the mystic gifts of the Wise Men from the East, but silently Mary ponders on their meaning.

Gold for Christ's Kingship, frankincense for His God-head, and—myrrh?

Myrrh for His mortal nature, for His death and burial. Myrrh meant trials, tears, testings of all the powers of her heart and soul.

But only thus, in God's design, was the Redemption possible. Had not the Prophets long ago foretold it? Mary understood. She must be strong. She must trust Him to support her in the future sacrifice. Back to her mind with striking vividness come the words of Holy Simeon: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."¹

Was she not, too, with her Divine Son, a Predestinated Victim? Little did Mary know at that moment, however, how soon she should feel again the sacrificial sword which at last would pierce her through in the unbloody martyrdom of her mother's heart on Calvary. Come what may, she would accept with love all things, bitter and sweet, from the hands of God. His Holy Will be done, in small things and in great, in life and, yes, in death.

¹ Luke 2:35.

With a mingling of happy and foreboding thoughts, with gratitude, and with a prayer for help in her human feebleness, Mary quietly falls asleep by the cradle-bed.

Suddenly and in haste, a tender hand is laid upon the little sleeping Virgin. It is the strong and loving hand of Joseph.

"Mary!" His voice is familiar to her ears, but there is something strange, alarming, in its sound.

The young eyes open.

How heavy is the sleep of youth. But in Joseph's face Mary reads with all a mother's intuition the dire presence of danger for her Child. From Herod, possibly. Of herself she does not think. But mother-love is up in arms. There is no time for lengthy explanation. A few words from the pale lips of Joseph are enough.

Tense as a strained bow to its arrow, her heart has but one question: "Whither?"

Ah, God knows. Egypt indeed is to be the end of that journey—but by what paths and to what destined home?

Hardly, it would seem, had the Magi departed in the night, when God's Angel brought his new message to Joseph in his sleep:

"Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."²

Quickly the Infant is kissed and pressed to Mary's bosom. From the soft, untroubled form of the sleeping Child, peace and the strength of God creep together to her breast, and swiftly Mary follows as Joseph bids.

To him alone, as head of the Holy Family, does

² Matt. 2:13.

Heaven issue orders. What father ever so faithful as he? It is God's way of teaching, for all time, the headship of the father in a family. What matter that Jesus and Mary are greater than he; their obedience is rendered faithfully to him, as he in turn knows no other purpose than to carry out in their regard, as well as in his own, the Will of Heaven. In the hour of trial, each is a support to the other in a mutual love that is unselfish and sublime.

"Who arose," the Scripture says simply, "and took the Child and His mother by night, and retired into Egypt: and he was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the Prophet, saying: 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son.'"³

Though in years no more than a delicate girl, Mary is already drinking the deep draughts of womanhood. The child of her is fading before the sternness of life. New forces are at work within her. They spring into instant action at the imperative call of every fresh event in her consecrated existence. In each call she hears the muffled music of the voice of God. It strikes familiarly with a haunting sweetness, and instills into her soul the strength of enduring heroism.

Mary casts one look about the little home which has grown inexpressibly dear as the latest sanctuary of the new-born Christ, and for the moment unbidden tears fall in rainbow shower across her brave but tremulous smile. Quickly, a last touch to straighten out the little room, while Joseph places under the fold of his mantle the mystic gift of gold offered by the Magi. It was not meant as a dower of wealth, but merely as a symbol of the great truth their devout hearts sought to express.

³ Ibid. 14-15.

God's Love had provided it to serve yet another purpose in the life of Christ.

With the Child folded in the warmth of her breast, Mary stands waiting upon the threshold of exile, the stars of her eyes raised to the stars of Egypt, with the steadfast luster of the new grace of sacrifice in their depths.

Though strengthened by the words of the Angelic messenger, yet Joseph trembles as he searches the frail, flower-like beauty of Mary's face. How will she stand the trial, the fear, the terror of pursuit, the danger and hardships of the journey, the dread of the unknown in the land of exile? But the spirit of God rests upon her face as the dew rests in the heart of a flower; and Joseph loves it, worships it, and smiles into it with the royal smile of an inspired prophet and patriarch. Gently he draws her to the sanctuary of his great heart, and she pours into it the sweetness and beauty of her own exceeding grace wherewith to sweeten the bitter waters of exile.

The stars shine forth and crown them both with glory, and spell for them the Name of God across the midnight sky.

Out into the silence and loneliness of the night they fare, under the menacing shadow of Herod's uplifted arm. Through the quiet streets of Bethlehem they pass and on into the wilderness beyond. Before them lies a journey of many days that will try all the heroism and boundless faith of Joseph's loyal heart.

But scarcely have they left the sleeping village, when news is brought to Herod of the far more conspicuous leaving of the Magi. Jerusalem is but five miles distant from Bethlehem, and in raving fury the King at once

gives orders for a deed that makes our blood run cold:

"Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the Wise Men, was exceeding angry: and sending killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the Wise Men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the Prophet, saying: 'A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'"⁴

That little attention was paid to this crime by the world at large is no wonder. The enormities committed by Herod were but commonplaces. Shortly before his own death, which was soon to follow, he was to murder his own son and heir who had expressed some satisfaction at the prospect of attaining to the throne. Herod later ordered the cold-blooded slaying of a number of prominent Jews, as if to provide some mourning on the occasion of his death if not because of it. Small heed, then, would be given to the cruel butchery of perhaps a dozen innocents in a tiny Jewish village.

But inexpressibly dear to the Babe at Mary's heart were those little ones and their lamenting mothers, and royally would He recompense them for the first martyr blood poured out because of Him. From the secrecy of Mary's sheltering veil went forth His bitter cry: "My little brothers!"

Every pang of those tiny bodies, every anguish of the mothers' hearts was driven into His quivering breast and lifted in the chalice of His Redeeming Love to the very Throne of the Father in Heaven.

⁴ Matt. 2:16-18.

Can any suffering equal that which, in conformity with His inscrutable designs, He Himself knew in the pain inflicted on the innocent and helpless lambs of His flock—He Who notes the fall of a sparrow, Who stoops to comfort the sorrow of a child, Who loads the Cross for us with the unearthly joys of suffering and sacrifice? His own child Heart was most cruelly pierced by the two-edged sword of that reign of terror; into It were gathered all the bitterness, suffering, and agony of both mothers and children.

But now, in all earnest, begins that long and toilsome journey into the land of Egypt.

Did the little human mind of the God-Man find it strange to adapt itself to time and space; to weather, hunger, and fatigue; to the heat of day and the cold of unsheltered nights? The sun broke and the winds blew and the rain beat across the *little face of God* that in the flesh He might know these elemental things, of which He would speak later in parables to drive home the more effectively the truths of His Gospel.

IN THE DESERT WITH GOD

SILENCE lays its spell upon the Holy Family. They have passed in safety beyond the jurisdiction of Herod, beyond the hills of Juda and the waters of the Nachal Misrayim, and Egypt, with its blazing skies and spiritual darkness, its wealth of Jewish memories and dearth of Jewish power, lies ahead across the sandy wastes.

In the Father's Providence for His Only-Begotten Son the dangers of the desert have for a time replaced the dangers that come from man! Both are held in control by His Almighty Hand. He tempers the wind and sun; He tames the tempest and the wild beast; and He suffers the malice of mortals to rage in impotent fury against His everlasting designs.

The charm of the Christ Child rests upon the desert, till legends blossom about His tiny feet of wild beasts crouching submissive to His smile and standing sentinel to the Son of God.

At times, as day breaks across the golden wastes, Joseph watches the glory of God drift across the face of the sleeping Child. The new and eternal wonder of his holy guardianship broods like the deepening flush of the morning on the placid waters of his soul. As glory grows in the face of the Child, still more in Joseph grows a mighty confidence in Its underlying power, till

the dangers of the desert and the dangers from man sink to utter insignificance and are lost in the sweet security of that enthralling face.

How uninterrupted must have been His spiritual communications to Mary and Joseph. Scripture says nothing, leaving it to the heart that knows and loves God, that is acquainted with His ways, and has learned the spiritual science of patient, attentive listening, to fill in the silence with the wisdom of His speech. Yet what a crown-jewel of all the delights prepared for chosen hearts must be a knowledge of the hidden life of Mary.

There are pictures of the desert which give impressions of unbroken simplicity of feature, exquisitely luminous purity of atmosphere, a breathless stillness, in which the smoke of the isolated camp fire rises heavenward with the straightness of a silver needle. Overhead is a cloudless dome of a blue as intense as the velvet texture of the robe of God.

How typical of the united life of the Holy Family. Simplicity of motive; the luminous purity of spiritual atmosphere; silence in which the Word of God unfolds; the fire of love which glows in the bosom of the desert and sends its incense straight to the Throne of God—and over all, His perpetual presence.

More and more intimate to us these holy lives become in the silence and loneliness of the desert.

It is always difficult to be rid of the idea that the presence of the multitude is an impediment to perfect communication with Christ. There is an exulting sense of freedom in pacing the lonely sands with Mary and Joseph, and gazing full and long at the Child in His Mother's arms.

Who could better interpret Him than Mary and Joseph? Joseph, in all the direct simplicity of his unwavering faith, whose strong incentive is the helplessness of Incarnate Divinity, and Mary, who dreams the dreams of Jesus as He sleeps upon her heart, who reads the visions in His upraised eyes, who knows with the intuition of Divine Maternity the fair unfolding territory of His human Baby-soul.

Alone with the two human beings He loved best, how hard for the Word made flesh to keep Divinity locked within. How hard for the Baby-lips to lie so close to Mary's ear and guard the mystery of God's unmeasured Love. Yet what do they not tell her of the love of the Creator God. No wonder Mary's love for the whole human race took fire from the beseeching pressure of those Baby-lips.

All day long the voiceless desert has looked up to the sun, and now once more the night sinks cloudless and serene. The great stars leap into their places and thrill the silence with their light.

"And the stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced," the Prophet wrote. "They were called, and they said: 'Here we are'; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them."¹

In the warm bosom of the desert lies the Child Christ, the immensity of God stretched out above and beneath Him in the speechless waste—Himself but an atom, it would seem, in His own creation.

Upon His tiny ear falls the music of the spheres; into His upturned eyes gleams the soft fire of their restless light. The wee sweet fingers of the rosy hand fold and unfold upon the eternal Power which guides the

¹ Bar. 3:34-35.

constellations in their courses and draws forth from them the music and the light to glorify His Name.

All inscrutable, within the shadow of the flesh, lies the hidden Godhead. Soft fingers tremble and relax. To the outward eye, all power is fled. Prone upon the warm sand the weightless hand falls back—a stray rose leaf in the vast waste of the desert—and the mighty wind creeps into its shelter and there silently falls asleep.

We have been in the desert with Christ. The trials of life have encompassed us. Dryness and desolation have taken hold of us. But as long as we have clung to Him, all has been well.

O, the goodness and the providence of God! He sends us into the desert, yet He Himself leads the way across its arid sands. Is it really the waste, the desolation, the dread monotony that our hearts have pictured? Wherever is the living God, there also is abundant life—teeming life, life which little by little touches our dulled senses, our numbed heart, our leaden soul, until our former years look poor and barren against the wealth of hard-won victory. When God is with us all things are noble and worthwhile. He is the *raison d'être* of our life and all that it entails. Come weal or woe, tempest or peace, once more we are content.

Before we were driven with God into the desert the strength and soundness of our whole spiritual life were more or less matters of speculation. Fundamental principles, doctrines, articles of faith—yes, of course, we accepted all of them without question. But how much for granted did we take them? How deep was our understanding? How strong our grasp? Was it deep and strong enough to carry us beyond the foundation to the delicate superstructure of the spiritual life?

Came the time to put us to the test. So the storm broke. God poured upon us His abundant graces; daily He fortified our soul; He lived close to us, touched us, spoke to us, lifted veil after veil of His unspeakable love and beauty. He won us as only God can win, the lutanist that charmeth divinely. And then, to reveal us to ourselves, to enable us to gauge the real worth of our love, He put us further to the proof, that we might have the securer knowledge of experience, and find confidence and courage for higher flights.

Now we are weary and bruised and sore, but no longer timid and afraid. We trust in God, and in ourselves no longer. We have weathered the storm and felt the touch of His sustaining Hand. Its invincibility, Its immutability, abide with us as a living Presence and fill us with the certainty of a Divine promise for the future. We need but trust, and love, obey, knowing that beyond the limit of our purely human strength lies His unbounded power. Good reason have we to thank God for the desert, rejoicing in our thanksgiving as the Apostle bids us.

There is often a grievous bitterness in the trials and afflictions that the world imposes, but let us find therein the Hand of God, the secret action of His Providence, and our heart will rise exultant upon its hymn of praise: "Blessed be God; blessed be His Holy Name!" The closer, the more faithfully we begin to look about for the innumerable manifestations of His love which follow every labored footstep across the waste of sand, the more we shall behold the desert blossom like the rose, and merge, unperceived, into the Promised Land.

It is worthwhile to be faithful, a thousand times worthwhile. When we falter and grow weak, when our

thoughts are torn and scattered from the contemplation of the Face of the patient God; when it seems as though we were utterly unfit to approach His Holy Presence and receive Him into the sanctuary of our distracted soul; let us cast ourselves upon His mercy crying, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." So long as we turn our souls to Him, that long we are safe, clasped in the harbor of His everlasting arms.

Trial and temptation do not endure forever. There are seasons equally of joy, often intense joy, when Christ draws nigh to the soul that loves Him, when God is sensibly experienced, and we rest in His sweet peace. He was always close to us, but He does not always make His Presence felt in just this way.

With Mary and Joseph, in their desert wanderings with the Holy Child, we have reached an oasis. But alas how often have we thought the oasis to be the Promised Land! Heaven is still to be gained, and other souls must be helped as well to gain it.

Thankfully, our weary feet have touched the fresh green turf. We have dropped amid the cool shadows and thrust our hands into dew-drenched flowers. Our lips have sought thirstily the clear, sweet waters, and we have lain still, at last, in the soft rustle of the palms and the song of the waking birds! The peace of God has trembled down through the sapphire heavens to flood us about and lull us from the torment of pursuing pain. We have felt weak with a delicious weakness, because we knew it was cradled in the strength of God.

Close to the Christ-Child in Mary's arms, we filled the palm of His satin-soft tiny hand with kisses, and forgot that far off in the fastnesses of the Spiritual City it was clothed with the thunderbolts of Jehovah. We

forgot that this Baby-hand had come "to cast fire upon earth"; that it had come "not to send peace but the sword."² "Behold the Lord will come with fire, and His chariots are like a whirlwind."³

We forgot. We drew the veil of God's dear peace about our toilworn soul at the invitation of this created loveliness, and considered not the awful mission that had called it into being, innocent, undeserving of aught but love, yet come to expiate the bitter faults of our guilt-laden souls. We forgot it all in the beauty of that Baby-hand. We forgot; and it was good to forget for that little space.

It is the peculiar grace of the Christ-Child to infuse into souls the sweet and simple characteristics of His Divine Childhood; to strip them of their galling fetters and set them free once more amid the sanctities of an unspoiled life where great and simple laws reign in the beauty of perfect harmony. There truly we become "as little children," the condition on which alone we can enter into the bliss of Eternal Life.

It is good to be a child. It is good to get back to the elementaries of a child's faith and hope and love, where we build our Spiritual City in the song of the lark, the heart of a flower, the jewels of the sky, the haunted bosom of the lake; where we see visions and dream dreams, and make our own all the marvels and wonders which fade and vanish in the heat and turmoil of the garish day.

Now we step forth from cool, sweet shadows into hot, limitless sands, with joy still about us like a luminous mist. It haunts our footsteps through the long, toilsome day, and folds itself about us when night falls

² Luke 12:49; Matt. 10:34.

³ Is. 66:15.

and we lie down in the rest and refreshment of its memories. For it is an immortal joy, as are all the lovely graces of this Child. Even if we should grow ungrateful, and forget, it will still lurk in the secret recesses of our soul, prepared once more to enfold and gladden us. It is ours for all time, if we will, as the Child is ours with all the Kingdom of His Love.

This, too, we have learned: never again to say, "It is impossible." When the apprehension of coming trial casts its shadow and our soul quails at its first chill touch, we shall no longer sink down by the wayside and gaze into the desert with hopeless eyes. We shall no longer say with agonized conviction: "I cannot bear it; it is impossible!" We shall no longer weigh in our secret heart honorable and dishonorable escape, nor waver upon the boundary line of the desert and the pleasure of the multitude.

No, we shall turn desertward to Christ, and placing our hand in His, say to Him in perfect truth: "Well, since You have led me here; since You have willed in wisdom that I should suffer the tempest and the desolation, here, then, Lord, am I. What now? I have but followed You; I have proved submission; upon You rests the responsibility. You know my weakness, my helplessness; and since You have brought me face to face with the crisis, You will rescue, and defend, and bear me through victorious. Behold, O Lord, I am in Your hands and I believe in You.

"May I do Your Will perfectly and with joy. Sorrows and sighs enough the world brings You. May I serve You in gladness, through failure or success, through shadows or the sunlight of life, rejoicing always in You, my One Supreme Delight."

Then truly, with Thérèse of the Child Jesus, we can sing:

My peace is hid in Jesus' breast,
May His sweet Will alone be done.
What fear can mar my perfect rest
Who love the shadow as the sun?

We stumble on, through long days and dreary nights of our desert-life, our face bent low to the face of the Child; there all the world may fade away, and all its joy and hope and comfort, so long as God is left to us, and His breath, the breath of Life, is on our cheek. The pain of Him is dear and holy; His solitude has become our friend. It is the time of secrets, deep, mysterious, surprising. Our soul is haunted by silent presences, which lay gifts in its quiet chambers and leave us richer in immortal dower. And we are more and more content.

THE CITY OF THE SUN

OUT of the desert sands, like a vision of beauty before the eyes of the Holy Family, rise the bright lands of the Nile and the obelisks of Egypt. In the distance lies Heliopolis, the "City of the Sun."

Little, as yet, do its inhabitants understand that "the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world,"¹ is even now about to shine upon its pagan darkness. He is the Light which shall be the lamp of another and an everlasting City of the Sun, whose domes and spires, as all devoutly hope, shall break at last the blue horizon line, when our own desert journey is over and our earthy dust is purged away.

After several days of travel, the tired Fugitives have skirted the Mokattam mountains. They are standing on the very site where, centuries later, the proud city of Cairo will creep up with its walls and palaces, its mosques and Allah worship, to mantle with the works of man those rocky sentinels of the Nile. But now, through the dreamy eyes of Mary's Babe, God looks out. And the blue of those eyes is dark with shadows, presaging the Almighty wrath to be aroused by the evil that will reign upon these hills.

How the Heart within Him beats and shrinks with

¹ John 1:9.

His knowledge of the future and the past, and how He turns in comforting relief to the true and stainless purity of His sweet Mother's breast.

There is His regal throne, so frail, so tender, humble and obscure, but precious beyond all the ivory and gold that ever have upborne the shining royalties of ancient Pharaohs. There, for all time, will men love to picture Him as the Child in Mary's arms, enthroned upon that new and most propitious Mercy Seat.

Hasan, El-Hakim, and Mehemet Ali shall reign upon the rocky steep, and the days of Ramadan shall be sung forth across the waters of the Nile from the minarets of his gleaming mosques. But around the sun-kissed warmth of Mary's bosom, where the Christ is held, shall break the choired song of the Prince of Peace, when all these others shall long ago have passed away and crumbled into dust.

The chill shadow of Mehemet Ali's Mount is left behind by our Travelers, and on through the lush sweet fields they wend their way, while all about them the scarlet flowers of the bright napolea flame and flash, and the dense green boughs of orange trees, laden with fragrant bloom and fruitage, dome the saintly heads that pass beneath them.

Only two more hours and the Wanderers shall have reached their destination.

They are safe at last, and with a new sense of sweet relief and tender thankfulness Mary looks into Joseph's watchful eyes. All the unspoken gratitude of their hearts is united in a silent prayer of praise. The Child looks up from Mary's arms and smiles.

Memories of that flight into Egypt still remain. At Old Cairo, underneath the Coptic Church of St. Sergius,

is a crypt, dating from the sixth century, which is dedicated to *Sit Miriam*, "the Lady Mary," because here, tradition claims, the Virgin and her Child rested for a time. At Mataria, until comparatively recent years, stood a sycamore tree, the successor of one which had decayed in 1665, and beneath which the Holy Family is said to have found a shelter. A cutting from the second tree was made to mark the spot and to preserve the old tradition.

But on the Island of Roda, not far from the very path where the Holy Wanderers passed, to this day is preserved the memory of another babe. For here, as rumor has it, Pharaoh's daughter found the child Moses cradled in a basket of bulrushes, and laid in the sedges by the river's brink, and here too, quite unknowingly, she handed over the child to its own mother to be nursed by her. A greater even than Moses was passing now, Who was to save and lead the people of Israel—all who would enter into His spiritual Kingdom.

In the lovely helplessness of infancy Christ is borne into Egypt, the land of the Gentile. In the years to come, in the long period of His toilsome, tireless ministry, His blessed feet shall never reach again this dark and pagan land. But He has loved it for its cherished memories; for Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, who abode here; for Moses and the multitudes of the Sons of Israel freed by Him; and for the exiled ones of His chosen people, who dwelled within this land.

He has loved it all as made by the hands of God: the verdure and the desolation, the slow waters of the Nile and the desert's golden sands. And He has so loved the scene of His mightiest manifestation of love and power, the turbulent waters of the Red Sea, to the murmur of

whose waves He may have listened during these first sweet years of tender childhood.

Lovely Flower of the root of Jesse, He graciously willed to bud and blossom in this consecrated ground, and to gladden it with the hidden glory of His Presence. In future years, the odor of that sweetness will still cling to it, and be a grace unto Eternal Life.

A few generations less than two thousand years before the coming of Christ, Joseph, the son of Jacob, paced these same lush fields and fragrant pathways between the limpid Nile and the "City of the Sun," in his wooing of Aseneth, daughter of Putiphare, "the priest of "Heliopolis."²

Did the Spirit of God prophesy to this lover, amid the rustling leaves and glowing blossoms, and under the low-hung stars in the breathless night, the coming hither of another Joseph, guiding with the tenderest care and reverent love a little saintly Maiden of his own chosen race, within whose arms should lie fulfilled the great Promise to his fathers? Did those voices of the night speak to him of the infinite love in that Baby breast, of the yearning for souls which should drive Him hither to this pagan land? Did they tell him of that Maid and Mother, whose early years should be spent, not like those of Aseneth, his own fair bride, about the temple of the false sun god, but within the pillared courts of the Most High, and whose virgin arms should bear Him into the very shadow of these pagan walls?

And did the whisperings of those starry nights reveal to him the spiritual splendors that should shine forth from the footprints of the Infant Saviour on the soil made sacred by Him? Did they comfort this faithful

² Gen. 41:45.

soul with visions of the saint-strewn Thebaid, down in the Southern valley of the Nile; with visions of the multitudes of holy anchorites, men and women, who would turn the solitude into a paradise, and would render melodious the silence of the desert with their hymns and praises to the glory of the God of Israel? Did they speak to him of the legions of martyrs, virgins, confessors, who would spring from this land of his adoption, which Christ would sanctify by making of it His temporary home?

Surely, in the soft hush of those Egyptian nights Joseph the patriarch, the prophet, the "Nazarite among his brethren,"³ may well have dreamed with Aseneth of those years to come, when Christ, in all His infant-helplessness, might dwell beneath those very stars.

But it is time once more to return to the Holy Family, for the sun is sinking in the crimson West, and its setting glory crowns for the weary Exiles the great landmark of Heliopolis, the rose-granite obelisk of Usertesen I, beyond which lie the sphinxes and the colossal statue of the false sun god.

Already, as they enter the streets of this "City of the Sun," all is ruin and desolation. The poor habitations of the present generation are clustered in the shelter of the colossi of antiquity—the same which have sentinelled the desert for three thousand years before the coming of the Holy Babe.

Yet, is He not "the Ancient of days"! When Time was not, nor any created thing, when sun and moon and stars and mighty winds and raging torrents still slept in the thought of God, He already was. "Before Abraham was made, I am."⁴ So Christ would tell the Jews.

³ Gen. 49:26.

⁴ John 8:58.

Poor earth! Poor, puny efforts of man! You are both grown wrinkled and gray and old. You are falling into ruin and decay, while He Who was before the waters were gathered and the hills appeared, "Who stretched out the heavens as nothing, and spread them out as a tent to dwell in," now, in all the fresh sweet beauty of infancy, smiles up at the ruins of ancient days from that throne of the Virgin's arms.

Here also rise the dome and towers of the Jewish Temple, erected more than a century and a half before by Onias IV, and meant to reproduce in its beauty the lines of the great pile of the Sanctuary at Jerusalem. Its doors will remain open until they are closed by the Romans in the year 73 of our own era. It is looked upon askance by orthodox Jews and is therefore hardly favored by the Holy Family or regarded by them with any degree of reverence. But the music of the palms and the inspiration of the Prophets still sound here in contrast to the chants of Greek Helios and Egyptian Osiris, of Apis and Mnevis. How the thoughts of man have gone astray. The heart of the Child melts with love, and silently bides its time.

Where, in this old ruin, now the refuge of an oppressed and conquered race, will the Holy Family seek shelter for the long period of its hidden exile?

Doubtless there is some deserted roof to give them silent hospitality. The simplicity of their needs (how simple in their possession of the God of all things!) is not difficult to satisfy. "Four brick walls, a flat roof of palm branches laid across a split date tree as a beam, and covered with mats," perhaps a little quaint mulkuf, with painted sails, to catch the quickening eye of the

watchful Child, and to fan His cheek with the cool breath of the northwest wind.

No, there is no danger of pursuit, though new hardships will be faced in the old, storied city, embalmed in the wisdom of ancients and the spices of Araby, and quiet as the burnt-out passions of the mummied kings. There is peace and restfulness, and the presage of sheltered months or years, wherein the Child might unfold His heart in the crimson shade of the pomegranate, and His stainless soul in the white luster of the lotus of the Nile.

THE HOME IN EGYPT

THROUGH the white streets of Heliopolis the Holy Family wandered, weary with travel, and saddened a little, no doubt, with the aching sense of homelessness, but feeling withal the sure sweet guidance of the Hidden Hand.

The little home was found—quiet and secluded—where the Child might grow under His Mother's eyes. Providentially, the gold of the Magi secured for them whatever else was necessary, for little had Joseph been able to take with him in the haste of flight.

However bare the dwelling, poor and cheerless in the growing dusk, it was now God's house, more truly than the Temple yonder which the masters at Jerusalem never had acknowledged. It was God's house, where He would grow in sweetness and in strength; where He would lisp His first word and play the dear drama of His first step; God's house, where He would sleep and wake and play in the worship of Mary's eyes.

It was all very rude and comfortless to the weary travelers, that first night. But what is difficult to the eager hands of love? A few armfuls of sweet halfo grass; the sorting over and setting to right of the scant belongings of the Holy Family; the spreading of a soft rug and a few rush mats; the gathering of fagots for

the cheery fire; and over all the woman-touch in sprays of flowering almond and pomegranate, and in alabaster cups of the moonlike Lily of the Nile.

In our own day, within the confines of a southern Cairo suburb, there still stands a sanctuary meant, it is said, to mark the very spot where the Holy Family dwelt during its sojourn in Egypt.

The Nile spread the wherewithal for their modest supper, providing sweet fat meat of the lotus, juicy lentils, wild cucumber, and the ever luxuriant date. The ring dove cooed in the caves and the flashing wings of the swift flamingo bore to them the fading glories of the sky. The Child looked on with starry eyes, cooed with the doves, buried His hands in the cool pink blossoms, and basked in Mary's smile; and Joseph's heart was full content.

Thus began the new, strange life in Egypt, with many a smothered thought of Galilee and the blue lake of Genesareth beyond the desert and the hills. It began in darkness and uncertainty, in utter abandonment to the Will of God, with perfect trust in the fidelity of His Providence: "Behold He shall neither slumber nor sleep, that keepeth Israel."¹

How often we are perplexed as to the will of God. Perhaps we have not learned the art of listening. The ear of our soul grows dull with the noise of the world, blurred with its discord. Perhaps there are voices within us, the voices of passions that clamor and will not be stilled, that jangle the pure sweet notes of the Divine Singer. Let us but learn confidence and surrender into the hands of God. From that, love, too, will follow, and all shall then be well. So then our own way

¹ Ps. 120:4.

will also be made clear, and we shall find our peace.

As we look up into Mary's face and Joseph's, a great stillness comes upon us. It is the stillness of the speech of God.

Surely, in this pagan land, all was very strange and new to Mary, who had spent her short sweet life in the shelter of the Temple and in the quiet monotony of the humble home at Nazareth. Under even the most favorable circumstances it is difficult to adapt oneself to new surroundings, free from disturbance of mind and soul. Mary was called upon to bring many sacrifices, gifted as she was with all the quick susceptibilities, the eagerness, the freshness, the kindness of mind, and the pure, keen sense of unspoiled youth.

The wealth of her new spiritual world, combined with the poverty and deprivation of her material life, must have tried her profoundly with the constant discipline and sharp extremes of suffering and delight. The heavy responsibility laid upon her by the will of God steadied her with a sweet pathetic soberness, which must have wrung the heart of Joseph with a strange and painful tenderness as each new feature of the life of exile unfolded before his eyes the latent strength and richness of her perfect nature. All these were records for only Joseph and the Child to read; yet, the beatitude of eternity will unroll them to the eyes of all the Blessed.

For Mary, the object of her worship was always sensibly before her, embodied in the humanity of the Holy Child. He was there within sight of her eyes and touch of her hand. His very voice recalled her wandering thoughts from harsh and homely duties, when work grew hard and wearisome to the succumbing flesh, and willing hands faltered at each unwonted task. What

rest and refreshment in the soft cooing of that Baby voice. Her soul grew still and her eyes moist with the holy happiness of the unformed song containing heaven and earth. An infinitely tender smile quivered through the tender tears, and she was fain to pause for the rainbows in her eyes. Praise arose and pain lay still, and the music of her joy filled all the pure and silent corridors of her immaculate heart. He was hers; hers for years to come; Egypt, or the desert, Judea or Galilee—what did it matter so long as no power on earth could rob her of this supreme Gift of the Almighty God.

How dull we are of comprehension, how dim our eyes of faith! We, too, have God in our midst; we kneel before Him, and proffer our love and homage; we work in His name and toil and suffer for His sake; we take Him, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, within our very breast, into the closest union possible, and He absorbs us and makes us one with Him. How insensible, with a great stupid insensibility, to the magnitude of the joy that we might know.

“If ye but knew the greatness of the Gift that I have given you.”

Poor, torpid senses of soul and body! What would Mary say of the ever fresh and limitless charm of that precious union, where her heart throbbed in successive ecstasies of delight, between the Divinity and the Humanity of the adorable Child? What would she say of the unclouded visions of her Eucharistic union in days to come, when He would no longer be visible to her corporeal eyes, but she would behold Him with the eyes of her spirit, as never yet has human being seen Him here below?

Now it was still her privilege sensibly to contemplate

the purely human nature of the Child, the perfection of Its outward form, the charm and fascination of His Babyhood; the pathetic appeal of His helplessness. Divinely dear to her was every coo and plaint of His Baby-mouth, every curve and dimple of His shining face, and the pure pink flush of His satin skin.

And, the eyes, those great wondrous eyes of the Christ Child! A silent awe would creep into Mary's enchanted soul and all the sweet familiarity of His humanity slip from her as worlds of Divine Mystery were lifted to her adoring gaze. They were the one thing that betrayed Divinity. As the midnight sky is contained in a drop of dew, so was the Divine Nature contained in the sapphire deeps of those two wondrous eyes; and Mary's soul sank ever deeper into their mystic splendors until the whole world vanished and she was lost in God.

THE FIRST ROSE

CAME the time when the tiny hands of the Christ Child grew restless and reached out beyond His Mother's arms, in obedience to an assertive childhood instinct.

A bit of sunshine through the open door; the sudden note of a joy-drenched lark; the flash of a rose; the bright shimmer and sibilant whisper of Joseph's toiling saw in the fresh silence of the early morning—at once the little hands reached out with the dawn of a child's spirit of investigation, and the blue eyes grew wistful for joys quite out of reach.

In all things Christ wished exteriorly to pass through childhood's normal stages.

Out across the wide world of that cottage floor crept and struggled the breathless Child, all awonder with the first sense of toil. It is a new kingdom of power which His little limbs have involuntarily revealed to Him. Mary's foot has craftily approached to Him a bit of gorgeous flower. With hands stretched out in a last victorious effort, the Child has grasped the glowing rose, and sitting up with a proud and solemn look, which the laughing mouth belies, He presses the rich blossom to His Mother's lips.

That must have been the first rose that Christ gave

to Mary; the queen flower to the Queen Mother, the first trophy glorified with the lovely and impulsive triumph of His Baby feet. Was ever rose so lovely, was ever deed so sweet! It seemed to Mary that she had never known a rose before.

The little, round, pink knees were red and rough and indented with their long journey across the cottage floor, and the pretty palms were soiled and moist with their first labor for Mary. But the heavenly larks in the Mother-heart broke forth with songs of joy; and rose and Babe were drawn together to her breast.

We wonder if, as is the way with mothers less perfect, less exalted, the crimson rose was laid away in some safe and secret place through the long years of Egypt and Nazareth and the Ministry. When the parting came, and she was left alone with only heavenly memories to keep her company, did she fondle it once more, brown and faded, but with the sweet pungent fragrance of other days clinging to its tender petals?

How it calls up visions of Egypt: the wide sapphire sky, which dwarfed even the desert, that sky of a blue so living it seemed ever ready to break with angelic speech; the slow waters of the Nile, chaliced with a thousand alabaster lilies; the hot sun and the cool stars; the radiant face of the triumphant Child, with solemn eyes and a halo of golden curls; and the rose—oh, miracle of unearthly revelations! How human it all is, how agonizingly real, since those same feet have trod the bloody road and God looked down from Calvary.

Slow we are to realize that in these little things Mary attained even higher and sublimer knowledge of the God-Man, of Divinity Itself, than all the scholars and masters of Israel could hope to learn! What revelations

of Divine Love must have flooded her soul at the pressure of that rose to her lips by the Baby-hands of the Incarnate God?

The learned ones of earth, the doctors, philosophers, teachers of Divine science, descant profoundly and loftily speculate upon the Godhead, upon the double nature and the unity of Person in Christ. Their work is elaborate, often marvelous, not seldom even excellent in its way, and yet we sometimes picture to ourselves how Mary would have smiled her dear sweet smile of simple, tolerant love, and wondered from the depth of her humility how it was that she, so unlearned, should find herself familiarly and intimately at home with God, where the coldly reasoned knowledge of others has often failed to bring them any nearer to Him, the end of all human knowledge.

There was no least thought, word, or action of Mary that did not bring her nearer to God. Her meat and drink in the days of the Hidden Life was the true knowledge and wisdom which she drew, not from the pages of human lore, but from the pure, upturned face of the Christ Child.

O, these stupid, overgrown, inflated minds of ours! How often they fail to realize that the first condition of true wisdom is to be "as little children," without which we cannot even hope to "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."¹

Rejoicing in the Holy Ghost, Our Lord exclaimed: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones."² And in the Book of Proverbs Divine Wisdom invites:

¹ Matt. 18:3.

² Luke 10:21.

"Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me,"³ not indeed that we may cultivate a faulty childishness, but that we may attain the wisdom and prudence of those who are truly God's little ones. Many a rose the hand of the Christ Child will press to our lips as well, and, like Mary, we shall drink deep of His Wisdom and Love.

"But the foolish things of the world," the Apostle says, "hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong."⁴

Let us go to Mary. She will teach us wisdom and discover to us "hidden treasures and the concealed riches of secret places." What our lack of spiritual insight has failed to decipher, she will make known to us, and we shall become "poor and little, and of a contrite spirit," and we shall sweetly "tremble" at her words. For she will teach us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom—a deep and tender, child-like fear that does not dread God's punishment, but would not in the slightest ever fail to do God's Will, simply because it loves Him so.

Hers was the most perfect and highly developed spirituality, after Christ's. What, then, must have been the result of that intimate conformity of the human will with the Divine in this loveliest of all types of womanhood. And how that Christ Child loved her as He pressed to her lips the gorgeous rose with all it symbolized.

Here, as in all things, Mary's whole being responded to the Divine inspirations. Her soul had never known sin; her instincts had never been perverted. God found in her a perfectly keyed instrument of exquisite deli-

³ Prov. 9:4.

⁴ I Cor. 1:27.

cacy and purity of tone for the light soft sweep of the Baby-hand. What wonder that the sublime song of the Divine and human nature found music in that more than seraphic soul. What wonder that Mary's spiritual science was immeasurably beyond that of saints and sages, who never held Him in their arms, nor listened, entranced, to the unearthly sweetness of the strains of His Baby-voice.

Mary's will in its perfect pliancy, her heart in its every emotion, were the living keyboard on which God might play His divinest harmonies. To the least touch of His hand, conveying ever so gently the message of His Will, her sweet responsive chords yielded, note for note, the burden of His song. If the minor tones of earth crept in, Christ gathered them also into the music of her life, and enriching them with grace, enabled them to cheer many a mother's straitened soul in the days to come.

FIRST ADVENTURES

THE little venturesome spirit of the Holy Child, exhilarated with newly discovered power and eager to attain unaided the lovely things of His tiny kingdom—for I am describing exterior manifestations only—grew in boldness and ambition under the sweet temptation of Mary's smile. Till one day He stood alone.

The great round earth at last became a pedestal for the tender feet of the Incarnate God. Those little feet of the Creator clinging helplessly to the hard rough earth, those tiny feet about which angels hovered in silent adoration, for one blissful moment poised themselves unaided—till the red lips quivered with Baby fear and the hands reached out for the harbor of Mary's arms. O sweetness of Mary's kisses! O sacred moment of Mother-love! O blissful instant of speechless worship from creature to Creator!

What is that pathetic something in the pride of a mother as she watches the first tottering steps of her baby boy?

There is, of course, the tremulous fear of danger to the priceless little man, venturing for the first time from the safety of her arms; there is the radiant joy in the miracle that her tiny boy is achieving before her eyes; there is the pride of motherhood which claims

with a new passion of possession every atom of that little body which is giving birth to new energies in the great universe of mind and matter, and in obedience to external laws, doing its infinitesimal part in forwarding the infinite design of the Creator. But above all, there is the tender, choking love of the yearning heart, which forecasts the bitter time when those little feet shall wander, perhaps forever, from her clinging care; when they shall tread the path of life through the City of Sin, and go down into the valleys of pain and humiliation; when they shall struggle up the height in the face of danger and stand perhaps upon the perilous pinnacle of fame.

Is it all of that a mother's heart can feel? What then of Mary?

Is it only the simple world of that cottage floor, with Mother's arms to save the Holy Child, that she saw those little feet unsurely tread, or did other visions rise before her eyes?

Poor Mary! Poor little Virgin Mother, Prophecy-haunted, Seraph-haunted, God-haunted! Torn between transport and anguish was her mother's heart. For what did not the tottering feet of the Christ-Child trace before her God-illuminated eyes in their short journey across the cottage floor. O, the dread and distant day, when the wandering away of those little feet will have an import which never human-mother soul could bear alone.

There would be heights and valleys, steeps and plains, beyond what mother heart had ever dreamed or foot of man traversed. The mighty Prophecies of Isaias and Jeremias, of Daniel and Zacharias, cast phantom lines in dim perspective before her shrinking eyes. He shall

be led "as a lamb to the slaughter." As the Child at last stood, wavering, within reach of her outstretched arms, she felt her strong young soul waver at the very brink of her human motherhood until the Christ-Child cast Himself into her arms, and she felt herself sinking into the deeps of the Divine.

She, with Him, is the predestinated Victim. She, too, must bring those sacrifices, which only the Power supporting her enables her to bear. Henceforth, all generations shall cry to her for intercession with her Son, as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of all Graces.

Wonderful indeed were those days at Heliopolis. Looking eagerly into the holy babyhood of Christ through the soft veil of time floating across our view, we almost shrink and tremble with awe and unworthiness as our heart draws us closer and closer into its divine intimacies. And yet we dare to weave our loving fancies about that sacred humanity which He assumed that He might be like us in all things, sin alone excepted.

* * *

Came another great and memorable day in Mary's life. It was when, at some strange marvel of His Heavenly Father's handiwork, the little lips of the Divine Child struggled into articulate delight, and in a sweet exuberance of spirit babbled softly: *Abba! Abba!*—meaning "Father! Father!" These were words that He had caught from Mary's lips.

The Word had spoken, and the Word was God.

That, too, was the first articulate speech from Son to Father, the first vocal prayer of the divinely-assumed humanity; the first outward testimony of the Incarnate God to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe . . . a mighty

word from the soft sweet kingdom of two lips: *Abba!* —“Father!”

And as that word went forth from the little sanctuary at Heliopolis, it seemed to Mary's joy-steeped soul as though the very hills and valleys must repeat it in their exultation. The world took on for her a new and radiant light, and the common things of life seemed to be transfigured.

In every tender climax of His Infant development, there was a touch of the Divine. The first dawn of intelligence in His tiny face, His first articulation, His first word, His first little creeping journey across the floor, His first step—what keen significance they had to the transported heart of Mary. Her life was one long meditation, one prayer of contemplation, one unbroken act of worship and adoration and service. It was so completely one with Him, that every motion of her body, every thought of her mind took its source from His human needs or His Divine Will, and ended in His holy service. She lived and breathed and had her being in her Religion, and her Religion was her Child.

Christian mothers, in the strong sweet folly of their love, are forced constantly to stem and check their affection in its headlong rush, lest they forget the Creator in the creature. They cool their fever and still their turbulence in the spiritual founts of the Divine Love, until the little face of their loved one is mirrored therein, pure and radiant with the touch of the Holy Spirit. Thus, human love takes on the truer, fairer, deeper colors of immortality.

They have no longer to conquer that ignoble jealousy which too readily may shadow the portal of a mother's

heart, a jealousy which seeks sole possession, secretly and inadvertently perhaps, against the supreme claim of God. Now joyously, they find their child in Him, and Him in it. They train their stubborn will to follow the guidance of that Love which not only contains their human love, but doubles and multiplies it, and sets upon it that seal of the Divine, which shames all cowardice and selfishness. It shows them finally how poor and paltry, in comparison, is a purely and exclusively natural affection embraced by blinded and passion-tossed souls as the height of earthly bliss. More than content, they now share their loved ones with God, to possess them in God, and to hold them at God's ineffable mercy.

But for Mary, first and greatest of all Christian mothers, there were no bounds to the love she might lavish upon her Son. From the crown of His head to the sole of His tiny, adorable feet, all was God; God in miniature; God in fulness and plenitude. She might lay her kisses upon His mouth; she might bid Him lie obediently upon His little palm-leaf bed, or stand Him in a shrine of lotus lilies while she worshipped in prostrate awe. She might open to Him the holy of holies of her inmost heart, or look upon Him for a long, sweet hour. And always she would find Him all things to her, until her soul would break in song upon her lips, with only birds to listen and the heart of her Child to keep rhythmic measure against the great full floodtide of her own.

Long and laborious hours the sage pores over volume after volume of his lore; long and laborious hours the scientist scans page after page of the book of Nature; but the saint, with heart aglow and the breath of the Holy Spirit wafting through his soul, seizes and pos-

sesses in exulting joy the life and spirit that lie beneath the outward forms of things and views them all in the pure glory of God's eternal day. So Mary heard and listened, and treasured up within her heart the mysteries of God. Well might she smile, with tender pity, into the tense faces of the worldly wise, who study long and yet may learn so little, while she remains for all time and all ages, the Seat of Wisdom, pure, white and resplendent, whence shines in all its glory the beauty of the *Logos*, the splendor of the Word.

She will teach us how to find a world of wisdom in that prayer of the Baby-lips of Christ—*Abba!* "Father!"

* * *

Among the ruins of the City of the Sun, at the very time when Mary with the Child traversed its silent streets, might still be seen the long white halls, with fountained courts and dome-palms, where Plato may have spent his travel years in Egypt. So near, in fact, did he in some ways draw to Christian truth that St. Augustine, in his *City of God*, applied to him the words of the Apostle: "Because that which is known of God is manifest in them, for God has manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also and Divinity."¹

One day, the true *Logos*, the "Word" of the Eternal Father, was to take material form, the Invisible was to become visible, the Word to become flesh, and in the little tender figure of the Infant God, to play, perhaps, within the very halls where the soul of Plato searched for Truth.

¹ Rom. 1:19-20.

Truly did the mind of God, in its baby bonds, grasp the long-forgotten memories stealing in and out on the desert wind through the cool dim shadows of those deserted halls, and the soft baby palm passed gently over the rough walls, while a tender pitying smile crept over the mobile infant lips. We can see Him, Mary's Child, with little feet dipped in the cool green waters of Plato's placid court, and His great eyes reflected through a mass of tangled gold—those eyes, large with greater truths than ever those waters mirrored from the eyes of the prince of philosophers, truths actually, which lay hidden in the azure deep of the eyes of God.

The day was yet to come when He should stand in the Temple at Jerusalem, radiant in the wisdom of His gentle boyhood, teaching the doctors of the law, and unfolding to them the Scriptures.

To no one will ever be given to come so close to the fountain of Divine Wisdom itself as to Mary, who followed the little feet in their wayward wanderings, and listened with rapt countenance to all He spoke within her heart. But even to us, in the shadow of the Tabernacle, it is granted to pause and listen to the promptings of the Incarnate God, and there to lay our needs before Him.

THE EXILE OVER

QUICKLY months slipped by and the time approached when again the messenger of the Most High was to appear and recall the Exiles to Israel and to the gentle hills of Galilee.

Surely, one of the great angels at the Throne of God was deputed for this mission. It may have been Gabriel himself, the Angel of the Incarnation.

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from Heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire."¹ So St. John seeks to make visible for us one of the powerful angelic spirits whom he beheld in vision. Less overawing, doubtless, to St. Joseph was the outward appearance of the high visitant now sent to him from God as the messenger of most welcome tidings.

Following the Egyptian custom, the Holy Family was spending the still hot night on the palm-leaf roof of their humble cottage. Back and forth, under the quiet stars, the strong, upright form of "the just man" Joseph paced, pausing only now and then to gaze down reverently and tenderly upon the sleeping Mother and Child, and pondering in his great and noble heart the inscrutable designs of the Almighty.

¹ Apoc. 10:1.

He could not read the future; he knew not how the great end of that little life was to work itself out. He was familiar with the Scriptures, and had pondered the prophecies of the Messiah, but what was to be his own small part in this great drama? Was it just the simple daily life of humble toil for the material necessities of the Incarnate God and His Virgin Mother?

Close he walked to the Will of God; so close, his ear was attuned and trained to no other voice. He looked neither to right nor left. He looked not even down into the stirrings of his own heart, nor heeded the voice of its natural pleadings.

But for all his humility there was in Joseph something akin to the majesty of that Egyptian night, with its starry diadem, and the purple velvet of its sweeping tent. In the high places of his lofty soul he glorified, with an exultation of holy joy, the Divine Providence which had willed so to dispose it, that the rough hand of toil which held the saw, and fashioned the wood, and earned the daily wages for the frugal comforts of the Word made flesh, was a royal hand, and the blood in its pulsing veins was the blood of kings. He marveled that the King of Heaven, coming in helplessness and poverty, should yet wish to seek dependence upon the royal blood of earthly kings, and that the regal soul of David should reach out to the Infant God through the touch of his own strong hand, and serve Him in its loving ministrations.

As meditations merged with dreaming, the weary head drooped beneath the weight of the ancestral crown, and Joseph slept. Then followed what the Scripture tells:

"But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying:

'Arise, and take the child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child.'"²

Morning dawned at the golden rim of the desert, and the stars throbbed expectant upon the brow of day. The cool breath of awakening nature stirred the mingled locks of Mother and Babe, but sleep had been driven from Joseph's eyes by the angel vision. His soul stirred and trembled in the strong spell of its exceeding joy. Yet there before him was a vision even more beautiful, that of the Infant God, sweetly asleep in Mary's arms. A tender smile gathered about Joseph's rugged mouth; the memory of angel's wings flashed before his eyes, and then the strong man lay prostrate before His Creator present there in human form.

"Mary!"

There is no tremor in the voice as once before; no strain of repressed pain, nor note of yearning over the tender helplessness of Mother and Babe.

"Mary!"

"The rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land, the voice of the turtle dove is heard; the fig tree hath put forth her green figs, the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come."³

With a tangle of heavenly dreams in her eyes Mary stands in the glory of the morning, and for very joy lifts the Child high in her upraised arms, beneath the vault of the radiant sky, like a priest raising aloft the chalice at the altar. The face of the Child dimples with her own bright joy and the sweet lips call through the fading

² Matt. 2:19-20.

³ Cant. 2:11-13 (slightly adapted).

stars: *Abba! Abba!* But from Mary's heart flows a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Father Who ordereth all things sweetly; her soft voice rises with her Son's pure tones, while like incense floats aloft the self-same anthem from Joseph's heart:

"Praise the Lord from the heavens. . . . Praise ye Him, O sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars and light!"

The stars set, and the sun rose upon the fair new epoch in the life of the Holy Family. Only the golden desert, transfigured in the light of hope, now lay between them and Galilee.

In Christ was then fulfilled what had long before been prefigured by the Prophet Osee, when he wrote: "Israel was a child, and I loved him: and I called My Son out of Egypt."⁴

Literally, as is evident, these words refer to the people of Israel, but typically they foreshadowed the return of the Messiah out of the land of the Pharaohs. This interpretation is made entirely certain by the words of St. Matthew. Describing Joseph's flight into Egypt with the Mother and Child, the Evangelist immediately adds:

"And he was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the Prophet, saying: 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son.'"⁵

We find the Holy Travelers once more upon the road, Mary seated on the little beast of burden with the Child upon her lap, and Joseph walking at their side. The Child's tiny hands pet and fondle the rough coat of the friendly animal and His voice makes sweet and merry the long hours of the desert day. His blue eyes light upon the loveliness of the landscape, and His little finger points it out with a child's insistence to Mary

⁴ Osee 11:1.

⁵ Matt. 2:14-15.

and Joseph, that they may look and be refreshed, and praise the dear providence of God which creeps from hidden places and secret ways under the divine magic of the tiny hand. Joseph wonders that they never saw such beauty on their way to Heliopolis; and Mary, in the wisdom of her Motherhood, smiles tenderly and looks into that radiant and inscrutable little face, for "the land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise."⁶

There is no haste now, save the haste of joy; no danger of pursuit from the malice of men. Joseph can take the cool and pleasant route along the blue waters of the Mediterranean to Gizeh of historic fame, where Saint Helena was one day to build a noble Christian temple to the Child Whose little feet had come and vanished, leaving their holy echo among its verdant hills. Thence on to Ascalon.

There were difficulties, though, awaiting Joseph in Israel.

"Who arose," St. Matthew wrote of him, "and took the Child and His Mother, and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither: and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was said by the Prophets: 'That he shall be called a Nazarene.'"⁷

Doubtless it was the Angel of the Incarnation who again appeared in a dream to Joseph. Joseph turned once more toward the home of his earlier days, the city

⁶ Is. 35:1-2.

⁷ Matt. 2:21-23.

of his holy nuptials with Mary. Skirting lovely Carmel, he came at length to Nazareth, "the flower of Galilee."

It had been a journey of the spirit no less than of the body for these Holy Ones, so different from each other, yet touching at salient points of mutual appreciation, treading the path of God from different levels of loveliness, each forging onward under the motive power of love. This lightened every burden and sanctified every joy.

* * *

To the Holy Travelers, long restricted to the sterner, simpler beauties of Egypt, where there was far less to touch the soul through the power of the senses, the first glimpse of the foothills of Galilee brings anew the vision and breath of a terrestrial paradise. Through the deep gorges of the mountains of Menasses they pick their way. Gradually the towering height of Carmel casts its shadowy prophetic crown upon Our Lady's gracious head. Then, at last, they emerge into the gentler landscape of Galilee.

Before them lie the lowlands, starred with lilies and orchids, like royal carpets which celestial weavers might have dropped from the parapets of Heaven for the feet of God. Above their heads the wooded hills are sheeted with the gorgeous crimson and stainless white of the anemone, amid which the cyclamen finds a foothold for its purple bloom. Mary's heart rejoices in this living beauty. It calls to the hills: "Be ye fair!" and to the birds: "Sing!"—until the woods are filled with the music of God's praise.

Slowly, the travelers climb the last steep hill that rises between them and Nazareth. Nearness to home and friends, to rest and all the simple comforts of a sheltered

life, creeps about their hearts and lightens the toil of the rocky way. Each step brings fresh and lovely memories of the days, not yet so long ago, when Mary and Joseph, youth and girl, wandered together the round hills over, unconscious of the wings that shadowed them, unconscious of the Filial Love that watched from the heights of Heaven and one day was to walk with them in obedient subjection through these same fair hills of Galilee.

Nazareth, at last, lying far below. White homes creeping up the hillsides of sapphire waves and sunning themselves like gulls upon the rocks, girded about by the misty green of the olive and the fig and the strong dark hedges of the prickly pear. Nazareth! "Flower of Galilee," whence should emerge the *Nazareth*, the blossom that was to crown with immortal glory the "Root of Jesse."⁸ Nazareth! the hidden little village, the softly gleaming pearl of great price buried in the blue and gently heaving waves of that Galilean sea of verdure, blow, and foliage.

Incredible to the loving heart and ravished eye of faith, that this Nazareth should bow its lovely head under the mad malice and arrogant scorn of Israel and share the cruel ignominy of "The Nazarene." Nazareth, which in turn would refuse to wear with Him, in loving unity, the mantle of degradation. For the day would arrive when the men of Nazareth themselves would bring Him to the brow of yonder hill, on which the city stands, to cast Him down headlong; but He would pass unharmed from their midst.⁹

These things are not now in the mind of Joseph as he yields lovingly to the spell within the musing eyes

⁸ Is. 11:1.

⁹ Luke 4:29-30.

of Mary. Together the Holy Travelers rest a little upon the hill's brow, with lovely Nazareth at their feet, and the green plains of Jezreel stretching far beyond. Mary draws the Child to her knee and points out to His questioning eyes the landmarks of the old familiar home.

The little house itself—that of course came first, just there, on the outskirts of the town, half-hidden beneath embowering trees and pink oleanders. Blossoms drifted like sunset clouds against the white home of the Annunciation. Still further on, down the rocky steep, the well, the only well in Nazareth, “Mary’s well” to this day, where all the women came to draw the sweet clear waters in their earthen chatties and cast shy glances at their own rare, dreamy, far-famed beauty reflected in the quiet pool. No wonder the Child looks up into His Mother’s face—that face of such incomparable loveliness—where the spirit lingers in every line and curve, and glows like living flame within an alabaster lamp, till with love and admiration His little Heart can bear no more, and a little finger is laid upon her lips. So Nazareth is lost in the golden mist of the Child’s mysterious eyes, filled with human tenderness.

Already the shadows are stealing upon the little village and laying furtive fingers all around. The ass is burdened with Mother and Child, and Joseph guides him down the flowery path to the dim streets below. Many a time the little party is stopped by the warm greeting of old-time friends; and the hearts of Joseph and Mary grow soft with the sweet knowledge that these are God’s friends too, who do Him unconscious homage in the secrecy of His hidden ways. Yes, all the world is quite different when Jesus shares it with them.

The little home is finally reached. The Three pass

under the heavy fragrant blossoms of oleanders, and the bolt is drawn. In the heavenly record of the wondrous Hidden Life of God-made-man, another golden leaf is folded back amid the silence of the angels and beneath the Father's watchful eyes.

THE COTTAGE IN NAZARETH

THE earliest pilgrims to Palestine mention two sanctuaries which then existed in Nazareth. One was known as the House of the Annunciation; the other, as the House of the Nutrition. In the latter the Child Jesus was presumed to have been "nourished," and to have grown up from boyhood into manhood.

Today, the first of these is called the "House of Mary," the second has been named the "House of Joseph."

There is detailed knowledge of the House of Mary in which, according to most ancient and authentic Eastern documents, the Mystery of the Incarnation took place. As early as the reign of Constantine, some three centuries only after the death of Christ, a magnificent Byzantine basilica was erected on that site, enshrining within its vast edifice what in that early period was evidently believed to be the House of the Mother of God.

But the House of Joseph, however creditably accepted, is not so easy to locate; while his supposed "Workshop" is mentioned only as lately as the seventeenth century.

The House of Mary may be more or less typical also of the house into which, after the Annunciation, Joseph brought his newly wedded Bride, and to which in every likelihood he returned after the Egyptian exile. Other such houses still exist in Nazareth.

At the front of Mary's house was a cottage-like structure built into the side of a hill. Two stairways leading up to it were cut in the solid rock.

There was but one single chamber, opening into a vestibule, from which a short stairway descended to a moderately large cave, or "grotto," hewn out of the hillside rock. This excavation the architects of the Emperor Constantine transformed into a strictly Byzantine sanctuary, holding it to be the sacred spot where the Word was made flesh.

Suddenly narrowing at its further end, the fair-sized grotto changes into a mere passageway, leading to an exit. A flight of steps ascends from this, but it is of entirely modern construction, dating back no further than the sixteenth century. It leads upward over an accumulation of rocks and remnants of an ancient wall, to a second, very small and dimly lighted cavern. From appearances it once served as a cistern. Today it is rather questionably known as the "Virgin's Kitchen."

It is possible that the actual home of Joseph was quite similar to this. There, we may presume, the Son of God and Son of Man grew up under the care of His Foster Father and the love-filled eyes of Mary. To this home, in ripened manhood, he retraced His steps after each day spent in toilsome labor.

Long centuries ago the impressive basilica of Constantine, which enshrined the House of Mary, was destroyed by vandal hordes, but the grotto still remained, to be transformed into a new sanctuary by the Franciscan Fathers who now enclosed it within their walls.

In this connection the House of Loretto naturally comes to mind. Is this the cottage-like one-room structure, fronting the road, which disappeared long ago

from Nazareth? It is possible that from under the ruins of the Constantinian basilica, where it might have been preserved, it was taken up by angel hands in the year 1291, the first of three miraculous "translations" ascribed to the House of Loretto. But Eastern tradition holds no record of any such miraculous intervention. Other problems confront us here which fortunately we are not called upon to solve. One thing is certain: humble souls who worship their Incarnate God, whether in the West or in the East, whether at Loretto or in the grotto of Mary's house at Nazareth, will not be left unheard by Heaven's queen.



Simple, as in Heliopolis, were the furnishings of Joseph's humble home. There was no lack of beauty, though it contained only necessities. Beauty was necessary to those Holy Souls, no less than meat and drink. But the beauty consisted in an exquisite cleanness, neatness, and harmony; in a certain grace of touch and perfect adjustment which accords with high spirituality as well as with high natural perfection of the esthetic sense.

Beauty is an attribute of God: "He is clothed in beauty." Under the inspiration of that beauty wherein God is robed, the souls of Joseph and of Mary put forth their powers to achieve all things beautiful so that perfect loveliness and harmony might reign in the pure sanctuary of the Son of God. Well might it be said of Christ Himself: "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men."¹

¹ Ps. 44:3.

How very lovely must have been that first morning of the hidden life in Nazareth.

Bright and early, as the sun is creeping around the shoulder of the hills, Mary and Joseph are out in the fresh sweet glory of the morning, with the little white-robed figure between them. Dappled is the scene about them with the pink flush of oleanders, and glad is all creation with the joy of living. Then, in his arms, Joseph lifts the Child, and Mary folds His little hands, while His lips sing softly after the mother-voice:

Sing joyfully to God, all the earth:
Serve ye the Lord with gladness.
Come in before His presence with exceeding
great joy.²

Let the heavens rejoice,
And let the earth be glad,
Let the sea be moved, and the fulness thereof:
The fields and all things that are in them shall
be joyful.³

Mary looks adoringly into the Child's enraptured eyes, and murmurs through the fulness of her heart, "Praise and beauty are before Him: holiness and majesty in His sanctuary!"⁴

Then the busy tasks of the day begin. Mary lifts the shapely earthen jar to her head and goes down to the well at the foot of the hill for its sparkling water. Joseph builds the fire, while the Child toddles in and out, His hands full of chips to kindle the flame upon the little hearth. And with those tongues of fire leap up, ever brighter, the flames of love in the great heart of Joseph.

² Ps. 99:2.

³ Ps. 95:11.

⁴ Ps. 95:6.

What wonder that he stays longer upon his knees than is at all necessary; that he takes the kindling, chip by chip, from the little hands. Slowly, slowly, he casts in each tiny piece, and watches the bright blaze calling forth responsive brightness from the Child's face. Then, as upon the path without Mary's returning step is heard, and her gracious figure fills the doorway with a new and softer light, Boy and man arise from their secret interchange of silent love.

The little table is spread, the frugal meal prepared by Mary's deft and dainty hands: each act a prayer, each motion a glad and tender act of love. Then Joseph stands, with raised arms and lifted eyes, to invoke the blessing of the Father. Mary and the Child join in, and the grace of God descends like sunlight from the skies.

Off to seek his day's work, Joseph goes his way. His path leads farther up into the village, where the simple shops and market are congregated for the needs of the many cottage homes. Today the "Just Man" has not long to wait. They know him well, these Nazarenes, and an order for his honest toil is quickly given. Soon saw and plane and hammer are making crude persistent music in the stillness of the valley. Heaven rejoices, knowing that the Incarnate God has willed to be nourished and supported thus by the hard, firm hand of humble toil.

Sometimes, though, the thought of his embowered sanctuary down the winding road grows too strong within the busy man. His firm hand trembles, and in spirit his great soul goes down in worship at the tiny feet making their own sweet, uncertain music upon Mary's floor. For a short moment, the arm of Joseph rests and his heart prays, till he finds himself half waking and half dreaming through the mazes of his joy,

and unconsciously his hand again takes up its business.

Mary, too, has set about her humble duties, ordering the little home, to make all fair and sweet and daintily attractive for Jesus and for Joseph. No speck of dust is left in any corner. Cups and plates are ranged in the little cupboard and garments folded in the press. Last of all, the spindle and distaff are made ready for use. Then off, into the starry fields Mother and Child go forth to gather great armfuls of iris and asphodel, the tall blue lupin with its chime of bells, the weird orchis, and the snowy gold-eyed daisy.

But the little feet grow weary under the noonday sun and are ready to turn homeward, where Mary fills the earthen jars with bloom of wood and meadow to gladden the sight of her devoted spouse. O, perfect work of the Mother of God!

What lovelier vision this side of heaven than that which greets Joseph's eyes as, in the golden light of the summer evening, he climbs the path to the little cottage up the road. There, all luminous in the open doorway, sits Mary, softly passing unspun cotton through her fingers, with the white figure of the Child nestled beside her on the floor, His blue eyes gazing off across the hills into the red-gold of the sunset sky.

In the shadow of the great oleanders, whence the song birds send forth belated choruses, Joseph has to pause. Once more he feels his strong soul tremble with the sweetness of his guardianship and the magnitude of its sublime responsibility.

Thus, as Scripture tells us: "The Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him."⁵

⁵ Luke 2:40.

All living was a spiritual dream for Mary and Joseph through those days in Nazareth. Material things seemed strangely immaterial; the commonplace, ideal. There was a freshness, a divine novelty to thrill the senses and stimulate the soul. It lifted veils and opened doors into the super-mundane world, it let the glory through in all manner of startling loveliness. Mary and Joseph were constantly catching the smile of it upon their lips, and the light of it upon their brows. They looked into each other's eyes, and knew; and then into the Child's, and worshipped. Their hands faltered at their tasks from the weakness of sheer joy; then grasped them with sudden strength and a sense of safety, as means from God to keep them in the beaten track of daily life, while their souls were soaring into infinite delights. It was the fullest, richest, deepest life that ever human beings lived, that humble life at Nazareth, the glories of which bid fair to dazzle our eyes the closer we look into the heart of it and take it to our own.

As the soft still night crept into the sweet seclusion of this little cottage, and laid its velvet touch upon the walls, and kissed the tired little brow, Mary's arms fell tenderly about her Child and drew Him upon her lap to spend the dearest, sweetest, holiest hours of all the day. There were grave confidences from her Boy of little troubles and perplexities, delights and mysteries and joys: the great domed palaces of the ants explored by childish eyes, with half stammered hints of "the many mansions in the Father's kingdom"; the snow-white dove that fluttered down and ate crumbs from His timid hand. Then softly crooned the voice in Mary's ear: "One is My dove, My perfect one is but one!"⁶ And

⁶ Cant. 6:8.

the sweet eyes looked into Mary's face and watched it flush and quiver and grow still, in the mighty love of God.

Two heads drooped over the little folded hands, and Jesus prayed His Baby-prayer: "Abba! Abba! Thy will be done; Thy glory come. Guard those I love. Amen."

AN IDYL

ONE night as Mary reads aloud to the Boy from the Sacred Script, and her sweet voice trembles under the music of the Canticle of Canticles, in His Heart springs up the loving plan to fashion just such a garden for her. In the time to come, He and she may go down hand in hand "into the garden, to the bed of aromatical spices, to gather lilies," and there feed upon the delights of the love which is burdening Mary's heart with its ever deeper and sweeter revelation.

For many mornings, long before the village is astir, the Boy is hard at work in a sheltered corner of the hill which overlooks the little cottage and the distant sweep of sunny plain. To the east, Tabor lifts its head. Carmel, to the west; and far off in the distant north, white-breasted Lebanon rises, white as the lilies that shall grow beneath the boyish hands and with their purity and beauty rejoice the stainless soul of His beloved.

The garden is all prepared: fresh mold turned up to the life-giving sun; stones gathered and laid in orderly rows about beds and winding walks; and paths made smooth for Mary's gentle feet. Many a lesson for His dear soul is the Boy pondering in His Heart. Many an obstinate weed and heavy stone, and dry, unsightly bit

of turf His patient hands remove, in prophecy of the hard, long days of His ministry, when the sun of His grace shall shine in vain into the hearts of many and the lilies of His love shall find no foothold in their stubborn soil. But He toils on, with a smile of settled sweetness on His face, His blue eyes grow deeper with the intensity of thought.

But the garden is yet to be stocked with the flowers of the Canticle. Day after day the young feet climb the sleeping hills and explore meadows and valleys for their dew-drenched treasures, setting them all in stately rows and pretty labyrinths for the joy of Mary's eyes. Deftly the untrained hands go about their loving work, and gratefully young trees and shrubs and plants respond to faithful care.

The cypress and the apple trees, the olives and the figs, the cinnamon and the sweet cane, spread their glossy leaves and fragrant spices at the hidden magic of this creative hand. And the hyacinth and mandrakes, the pomegranate and balsam richly bud and blow beneath His moist sweet breath. A sunswept space is still left open for roses, wherein His Heart might revel in crimson tides of love, space for the royal rose of Sharon and the wild sweet rose of the hedge. A cherished spot is found, also, for the lily-of-the-valley and the immortal "flower of the field." But every pathway in the garden of delights must be bordered with row upon row of the stately white-chaliced, golden-hearted, royal lily of the Lord's beloved.

One morning, when the birds are weaving golden songs in the rose-lattice about the garden of delights, and the tasks of the little home are done, Jesus draws His Mother's arm about His shoulder, and, looking

into her dear face, pleads: "Mother, come!" With the sweet trust and dependence which mothers love to show to the incipient manliness of their sons, Mary asks no questions but quickly smiles consent; and in the joyousness of her young heart whispers: "Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments."¹

The Boy draws His Mother into the secret winding path, up the hillside, under the orange and olive trees, and finally the two are "looking through the lattices,"² with wet roses all about them and the incense of the lilies blowing through. Jesus takes His Mother reverently by the hand, guides her in, and looks again into the glory of her face. But Mary cannot speak. Her love is all atangle in her throat, and the tears are lying in the deep blue shadows of her eyes. She kneels among the lilies until her eyes are on a level with the eyes of God; and from the lattices of His golden lashes those eyes of God look through.

This was one of the silences in the life of Mary which were created by the immensity of sweetness of Divine Love.

There were times when the fleshy veils of Christ's human nature seemed to etherialize, to become so transparent that the Spirit looked through and touched the spirit of the Virgin Mother with an unearthly thrill. It was all the more enthralling because Christ willed not only to appear but actually to be so undeviatingly human in His human nature. Here, when the ungovernable strength of her love broke bounds and involuntarily won forth from Him this prelude to the Beatific Vision, there was the overwhelming seizure of a Divine

¹ Cant. 1:3.

² Cant. 2:9.

surprise, a glory shining through the veil, from the blaze of Beatific Light.

But the veils of sense had not been rent. The Divine rapture passed. The sweet eyes drooped, and Mary laid her radiant face in the little sun-browned hands of her gentle Boy, while her heart went down in humble praise and lay in the shadow of His feet.

Jesus lifts her, in His young strength, and leads her to "the fountain of gardens: the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus,"³ and sets before her honeycomb and vine, that they may feast together, while the morning unfolds its loveliness to their attentive hearts and the garden bathes them about with wave upon wave of color and light and fragrance. But the eyes of Jesus grow pensive as He lifts the cup. He looks into her eyes, and, through them, into the dim beyond, while the blood of the crushed grape turns red upon the crimson of His lips, and there rises to His mind the future Consecration and the bloody Sacrifice to be completed on the wine-press of the Cross.

³ Cant. 4:15.

THE TWELFTH YEAR

THERE was a gradual getting used to human life those first twelve years. The Holy Child steadily increased in that experimental science which in loving humility He deigned to acquire, because He sought and loved every obstacle through which His dear soul had to struggle.

The little joys and sufferings were no surprise. But there was all the tender love and absorbing interest of coming into personal touch with them, of letting them enter into the natural development of that complete and perfect humanity which was to characterize His life on earth and secure the victory of His love over our wayward hearts. So the little fingers were burnt and cut, the feet were bruised, the head wounded; and the tiny body shivered with cold and was oppressed by heat, and bore its God-willed dole of human suffering. Mother, of course, must hear each tale of joy and grief, and must pour out the balm of her endless love and exquisite sympathy, while the human soul of the Divine Child weaved it into a heavenly tapestry in the sight of God.

As the Child grew into boyhood His little world took in a circle beyond the cottage door and Mother's guiding hand. There were berries to be picked, and fagots to be gathered for the fire, errands to be run to the village and word to be brought to Joseph's shop.

With the little tasks done, there were all the delights of a boy's intimate association with nature and companionship with others of his age; there were treasures of field and wood and mountain side to be collected for His Mother. Never could the Boy be quite happy until she had seen and smiled her beautiful appreciation.

One day, He laid into her ever ready hand an abandoned bird's nest, with its lovely treasure of chipped blue eggs, as blue as His own eyes. She told Him in return how she, too, thanked the Father for the Nestling that it had been given her to bear, and to set free at last in the haunts of men. She would not stay Him when His time would come, for her heart was that of the woman valiant.

Already, indeed, the eyes of her Son were raised to the distant heights of Juda. In spirit He scanned, with Divine prevision, the silver waves of the Lake of Galilee, and watched young John, with James and Peter, go down to the sea to fish. He saw the home in Bethany whence Magdalen would drift away into the haunts of sin to be saved at last by Him; there He saw Martha and Lazarus, and the others who should reward His toil. And all the while His Heart waxed strong, His Spirit was strained for the hour which His Heavenly Father had set, when His mission work was to begin.

Well can we understand how Mary counted the years and months and weeks and days, and every precious moment, until the time when His twelfth year would legally emancipate Him from her tender control. It was a trial to Mary, even in prospect, to contemplate the silent clipping of little tendrils which held Him to her in the sweet dependence of childhood.

These events were inevitable, Mary knew. She had

seen and pondered them sufficiently before she gave her *Fiat* to the message of Gabriel, but at the presentation of each new trial her Mother-heart still rose up and fought against the pitiful cry of nature. She was to lay up her pain in the breast of her Son as an inexhaustible treasure whence we, her spiritual children—as yet unborn to her—might draw indulgence and mercy in our day. With ordinary mothers it is too often simply the inevitableness of nature; with her it was a meet and beautiful submission to the Will of God.

In the life of every young Jew, the day came when he formally entered the synagogue, and, binding the phylacteries about his brow, became “a son of the Law,” subject to its prescriptions. That was the twelfth year of his age when he had legally reached his majority. Now, in the peace and sanctity of a Sabbath morning, we find Jesus wending His way between Mary and Joseph through the quiet streets of the city to be formally presented in the synagogue of Nazareth.

We see Him, a small, white-robed, golden-haired figure, replete with the unconscious grace and gentle dignity of sanctity, standing in the solemn silence of the people, and our hearts thrill as He lifts the long parchment, written from end to end in the golden letters of His own inspired text, and binds it solemnly about His glorious brows. He looks upon the people, this slim young Boy with the unfathomable eyes, this Son of the carpenter, Whom all the boys of the village love, and the children worship, and the old men silently revere; but as the voice of the multitude breaks out into the verse of Moses, to Mary’s eyes there blazes forth upon the brow of her Boy, the name of the King of kings: “I am Who am.”

"Who art Thou?" the Jews would ask, and He would answer: "The Beginning, Who also speak unto you!"¹

Silently, at the far end of the synagogue, Mary stands and worships. Her breath comes quick and short as the vision of the majesty of God blinds her eyes, and the great deeps of the Uncreated Light—though seen "darkly"—yield world within world of eternal beauty, into which one day He shall lead her and crown her to the music of the Word. The full beauty of that Incarnate Word is still veiled to her, Its music muffled; yet Its Divine and glorious life, indiscernible to the heavy-eyed multitudes, shines forth and blazes brightly before Mary's eyes of faith. He is indeed her Son, begotten of her ever-virgin flesh, but He is no less the Word, uttered by the Father through all the luminous eternity of His Being.

The rite is completed, and there, before her, stands a son of the Law Who is the Maker of the Law.

* * *

The first great obligation thus newly assumed will be participation in the Paschal ceremonies at the Temple in Jerusalem. They will take place in the spring, when from all sides streams of pilgrims will pour into the great city like so many rivulets in the sea. It is to be for Him a significant event to which He looks forward even now as a fulfilment, in part, of His Father's Will. Yet further trial and suffering will be involved in it for those most dear to Him.

With all this before His mind, the Boy Jesus stands pondering in His Heart the Law which He Himself had laid down, whose yoke He had now taken upon

¹ John 8:25.

Himself. What was the Paschal Lamb but a symbol of His own great future Sacrifice, when He would take upon His own shoulders the unutterable burden of our sins and offer up His own life in expiation to the Eternal Father. By His Passion and Death alone, according to God's Providence, could mankind be saved and the gates of the Eternal Jerusalem be thrown open to us. To obtain that guerdon we must apply to ourselves the merits of His Precious Blood.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

DAYS pass and once more the vitalizing hand of spring reaches out to the frostbound earth. It showers the hills and flowers the valleys. The song of liberated brooks is taken up by the rejoicing birds, and the glad thrill of resurrection stirs the heart of all created things. The thickly populated towns of Galilee are astir with preparations for the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, and this year Jesus is to go up to the Temple itself, with Mary and Joseph, as the Law prescribed.

In the early morning the caravan climbs the sun-clothed steeps of the Manasses, and all day long toils across the hill country of Samaria; past Sebast and patriarchal Sichem, and on to Jacob's Well, in the deep cool shadow of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.

Crimson tulips brim with glowing color the vale where Rachel watched her flocks, and lie upon the lips of the cool well where Jesus was one day to quench His thirst at the hand of the Samaritan—the thirst above all of His Divine Soul for the soul of a sinner. We watch Him as He draws His Mother to the quiet waters, and filling His slender hands, bids her drink. Mary lays her lips to the rim of the Divine cup, but her soul drinks in far deeper draughts of love.

From Jacob's Well to Beeroth is a long day's jour-

ney, but it winds amid the beauties of the flower-clad mountains of Ephraim, where the silver tones of the Boy's voice flooded the quiet valleys with the music of royal psalms. With gentle insinuation He led the earth-bound thoughts of the scattered bands of Jewish pilgrims from the material loveliness of the works of the Creator to the heights of the Creative Source, and flashed upon them His own heavenly light of inspiring worship. Loud and clear His modulations sounded on the crystal air:

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy face?
If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there:
If I descend into Hell, Thou art present;
If I take my wings early in the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:
Even there also shall Thy hand lead me:
And Thy right hand shall hold me.¹

Over the heads of the pilgrims sang out the pure sweet voice of Mary's Son. And as they looked up to Him in wonder at the melody and power of His song, His voice began anew:

Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all ye deeps:
Fire, hail, snow, ice,
Stormy winds, which fulfil His words:
Mountains and all hills,
Fruitful trees and all cedars . . .
Young men and maidens:
Let the old with the younger, praise the name
of the Lord:
For His name alone is exalted.²

¹ Ps. 138:7-10.² Ps. 148: 9-9, 12.

And still the pilgrims listened entranced to the wonders of revelation in the old familiar words, for the veils were rent by the music of the voice of God.

Beeroth is reached. Like a sentinel eye it gleams upon the western tip of the mount of Quarantine. The flame of the setting sun scintillates among its silver fountains with the welcoming light of a friendly refuge for the weary pilgrims from Galilee.

But in the stillness of the evening, when the camp fires are burning low and stars are throbbing in the purple vault, the Boy wanders off into the lovely solitude of the hills to ease His Heart of the wearing constraint of the multitude. He turns His eyes toward Jerusalem, only a few miles distant, and the young face melts into lines of sorrowing love. Presently the soft voice of His Mother breaks upon the silence of His soul: "Watchman, what of the night!"³

The Boy turns, as His Mother lays her arm across His shoulder with a smile upon her lips and the love-light burning with its slow, consuming fire in her eyes. Looking steadfastly into her trusting face, He answers solemnly: "The morning cometh, also the night."⁴

Little knew her beating heart how soon it would be pierced with sorrow, when for three days, with Joseph, she would seek for her Beloved, only to find He had been called to leave her for His Father's business. Well might Jesus speak to the Eternal Father David's words: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up."⁵ But Mary, in turn, could answer Him in blind and perfect faith: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready."⁶

At last, Jerusalem. Multitudes of pilgrims beyond counting are gathered here within its walls to celebrate

³ Is. 21:11.

⁴ Ibid. 12.

⁵ Ps. 68:10.

⁶ Ps. 107:2.

the Pasch. Three millions, Josephus estimates. Rather an evident exaggeration. Yet it serves to indicate how amazing was the throng, and how strongly the law of God was bound upon the heart of the Jew, though faint the spirit which animated it.

The Boy looks upon the seething crowds, the many stern, sharp faces, cunning and unjoyful, restive under the foreign yoke. His own young heart beats fast. They are looking for the blazing banners of a temporal king who shall lead them to victory against the abominated power of pagan Rome. He has come to raise instead the blood-draped standard of the Cross. Truly, a gigantic task. Through ages of perverse interpretation the Law of Moses has been transformed largely into a huge machine of temporal expediency, of judgment without mercy. Its heavenly spirit is bound fast to earth, but a few great hearts still grope earnestly, though helplessly by themselves, for the flash of vanished wings.

The heart of the Boy grows heavy to suffocation and His feet are weighted as with lead. He knows what hatred and defiance will glower up at Him from so many of those hardened faces. He is to beat His strong young life against the rock-bound obstinacy of so many of those hardened hearts. But the Cross which they will raise for Him—He shall dye it red in the glory of the Blood which neither time nor tide can efface.

But His time has not yet come. Quietly He will observe the Paschal rites. "Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be the solemnity of the Lord." So was God's Law laid down by Moses to the children of Israel when the Lord had newly brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.

⁷ Exod. 13:6.

Somewhere in the thronged city, the Holy Family gathers now to celebrate the "solemnity of the Lord." Their thankful hearts are busy with the wonders of that guiding Hand which has led its unruly and self-willed nation to the eve of Redemption and the gate of Salvation. There is still a bitter *Via Dolorosa*, as they know well and the ancient prophets have foretold—a "way of sorrows," to be stained with the blood of the last great Victim ere the multitude shall be led out of spiritual bondage to the precincts of the Promised Land. Unknown, unrecognized, their King and Lord, Who will be Priest and Victim, sits even now in the midst of their feast, in the stronghold of His own royal city. But the eyes of so many in that multitude are blind with pride, and their hearts are hard as stone. A carpenter's Son, with only the crown of His golden hair, is biding His time while they know Him not, and all of Sion trembles upon its base.

The sun's last rays are on the Boy's face as He asks of Joseph, in accordance with the Law, the meaning of the feast. And solemnly, with bated breath, Joseph reminds Him, Who is Himself the God of His people Israel: "With a strong hand did the Lord bring us forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Reverently, then, Mary slips her hand under the hand of Jesus, and it closes upon hers in the strength and youth of the Son of God.

Throughout the seven days of the unleavened bread, the Holy Family stays within the city. In silence and recollection, in holy memories and prophetic visions, in simple work and prayerful rest, in daily visits to the Father's Temple, and in long illuminating meditation on the Scriptures, the days slip away under the

Father's eye, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Eternal Word Itself interprets the written word for Joseph and for Mary, and spells for them the sweetness of its love.

Mary and Joseph linger above the golden head, bowed to the ancient parchment. A gleam of unearthly light follows the slender finger across the Sacred Text, illuminating, glorifying, revealing, reconciling all things in the glowing recesses of their holy souls; till their hearts burn within them, and they close their eyes and worship, in silence and in awe, the exceeding majesty of the Son of God.

As Jesus turns to the story of the Israelites' release from the Egyptian bondage, we can hear the low voice falter over the first and last of those dread plagues which fell upon the hardened heart of Pharaoh:

"In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike with the rod, that is in my hand, the water of the river, and it shall be turned to blood . . . and let blood be in all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and of stone."⁸

As He comes to the last of these dire visitations the sweet eyes of the Boy droop in pain over the slaying of "the first born," and the tears gather in Mary's eyes at the memory of the Holy Innocents. Then, sacredly, she lays her Mother lips to the bowed head of her own *First Born*, knowing that as such He too is "the Lord's," and profoundly she reflects within her soul on "the great price" which must still be paid to redeem mankind.

⁸ Exod. 7:17, 19.

THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

GREAT caravans are filing slowly, laboriously, out of the gates of Jerusalem, and the Holy Family finds its way as best it can in the unwieldy crowd. The Paschal Feast is over.

Close abreast of Sion, Jesus suddenly makes His way up the noble steep as the morning sun flashes upon the golden dome of the Temple. His young Heart is burning within Him; His limbs are tense with the overmastering strength of the holy passion for His Father's glory which seizes and possesses Him at sight of the multitudes.

Directly, His feet are drawn by the Divine Will to the wide open space under the Porch of the Gentiles. Here, at the Beth-Midrash, masters and disciples are met together, discussing and interpreting the Law.

There is no hesitation, no wavering or uncertainty in the action of the Boy. He is moving under the unerring influence of the Holy Spirit and presses on, forgetful of all but His Father's glory. Suddenly He finds Himself standing between the outer pillars of the great Porch, a small white figure in the lifting shadows of the morning, unnoticed, unannounced. His breath is caught in the strength of His emotion, His pure face flushed with the royal blood of Kingship, and in the

great eyes smoulders the consuming love of His Divine Heart.

There is but one word trembling upon His lips, one thought flashing its eternal beauty through His Soul, one need crying through the depth of His Being. *Abba!*—"Father!" With that word, the Boy steps out into the view of all, passes through the circle of disciples, and stands in the midst of the Doctors of the Law.

A deep hush falls upon the assembled sages. There, in the very midst of them, is Hillel, in all the dignity of his closing years, revered as little less than the peer of Moses. There is his young and ardent grandson, Gamaliel, who in years to come will teach Saul of Tarsus the intricacies of the Law. There is the unyielding Shammai, "who bound all that Hillel loosed." There, too, is Jonathas, son of Uziel, whose speech was so fiery, the legends say, that the birds as they passed above his head "either burned or were transformed into seraphim." There, finally, among the learned "seventy," are Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. For a moment all pause, awe-struck, in the impressive presence of the Boy. Then the thread of argument is brokenly resumed.

It was an age when all minds were occupied with the coming of the Messiah, Whose time, according to the prophecies, was at hand. It was a period, indeed, of deep and earnest study for the sages; but the obscure references to the meekness and abjection, the humility and temporal lowliness that were to characterize the Redeemer, were insuperable difficulties to their proud and wilful minds.

As the Boy listened to the perverse interpretations with which they sought to warp Eternal Truth into a sanction of the very pride and prejudice of their race;

as He heard, deeply grieved, the subtle sophistries with which they stifled the whisperings of conscience, and saw the dark veils their own hands cast about the faint light still struggling within them, He lifted His eyes and looked far into the future. In bitterness of spirit He saw and weighed all the untold havoc of those heresies His Church was to endure from the wilful pride of man. Then, rising up in the righteousness of Truth, He laid bare His inmost soul in quiet and impressive words.

Simple, direct and unadorned, pointed and unassailable were the illuminating truths that fell in question and answer, from His soft sweet lips, to the wonder and confusion of the accumulated wise men. His brow was majestic with the light of Truth; the flame of it blazed from His eyes and burned upon His lips. In all that assembly there was not one but felt his heart burn within him as the breath of the Holy Spirit swept from the lips of the Son of God.

Three days the Boy returned to wrestle with the darkness and obscurity of the most powerful minds of Israel; three nights He slept just anywhere, under the shelter of the porches, or on the Temple terrace, in the soft light of the throbbing stars.

He lived and moved under the pressure of an exaltation of soul against which "the cords of Adam" labored painfully. The soul of the boy wrestled with the Herculean mission of the God-man; it was Divine Love driving Him on with all the impetuous force of His young soul. No wonder the flames of the holy conflict blazed from the depths of His lustrous eyes, and burned in the tones of His low and modulated voice, and smote the hearts of those stern old men, till the pallor of His young

face was a thing to dream of in years to come, a dream to lie forever between them and the script of the Inspired Page.

But Mary and Joseph were traveling onward from Jerusalem, their eyes searching each group of pilgrims, their hearts longing for a sight of the adorable Presence, which as yet had never been absent from their side.

Mary tells her tremulous heart that the young, eager feet have carried Him far ahead with the distant leaders of the caravan, and Joseph believes He will wait for them or return before long. So they lift their voices with the multitude and chant, along the winding way, the psalms of the Return. Mary's sweet voice trembles as she says: "He swore to the Lord . . . If I shall give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, or rest to my temples: until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob . . . We will adore in the place where His feet have stood."¹ Her troubled eyes search Joseph's face for reassurance against the vague fear which haunts her Mother-breast. Jesus is not wont to leave them without word. There is a feeling in Mary's heart that the Boy is suffering, in pain, that He is enduring danger; and her soul is poised above an abyss of darkness which Joseph's comfort cannot penetrate nor his love dispel.

The Child is not at Beeroth. Mary searches among the fountains and upon the hills where she and Jesus kept their lovely vigil not long since; and as His words come back to her once more, her soul goes down into the chill shadows of a nameless dread, in this her first dark hour of dereliction.

Weary and suffering, Joseph and Mary hasten back

¹ Ps. 131:2, 4-5, 7.

to Jerusalem in the still hours of descending night. Joseph realizes only too well the dangers the Child may incur from the agitated state of the country, under the fierce insurrection of Sadoc and Judas the Gaulonite, then in progress; and his strong heart labors with Mary's own under this unwonted visitation of God. Out of the depths they cry unto Him that He may be attentive to the voice of their supplication. And God, from the heights of the mighty heavens, looks down upon them in His infinite tenderness—that tenderness whereof, in the darkness of trouble, we catch fleeting but intoxicating glimpses that keep us from sinking beneath the waters of despair.

It was a crushing trial to these holy ones of God's ardent predilection. Every moment was a crucifixion to the Mother's heart. Every throb of her blood another scourge, another nail, another thorn within its tender flesh. It was a martyrdom which left its glorious scars to cry aloud their jubilees from the heights of bliss.

FINDING JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

WHEN shall we learn the might and the majesty of the claim of God? When shall we learn the literal insignificance of all earthly claims against it? O little and limited mind of man! How short is thy vision, how restricted thy compass.

The vast, the unattainable, the unsearchable greatness of God. And yet each claim of father and mother, brother and sister, lover and friend, husband and wife, rests upon Him, is sanctified and ennobled by our union with Him, and our complete, most ready, and unquestioning subjection to His Will. If He leads our dear ones whither we may not follow, it is but a temporary swerving from our path, and we trust to meet them yonder where the Saviour waits to unite us with ever closer and holier bonds.

Our hearts cry out and lift their claims to Heaven, and rebel against the agony of God's seeming disregard. But silence holds in its bosom a deeper wisdom than we can comprehend, a deeper gladness for our anguish than we shall ever fathom. It bids us lift our faith above our claim and bide the time when He shall crown it with the bliss of vision. . . .

So now the Child lays upon His Mother's heart the burden of her pain, knowing that He shall heal it in

the days to come and draw from it diviner sweetness for the crushing agony of that weight which for the present bears it down.

On that last night of Mary's and Joseph's search in Jerusalem, the Boy's own Heart must have sorely ached for those who were agonized with and because of Him. Never a pang passed unheeded in that perfect Heart of Christ, nor a sorrow unharbored in its gentle love. As He lay unseen in a temple nook, above the silence of the sleeping city, weary with the strain of His overcharged soul and the strong tension of His young mind, what would He not have given in this hour of abandonment, for the comfort of Mary's arms, and the Mother-lap in which to pillow His weary head. What would He not have given for Mary's quick and comprehensive intuition of the love and pain, the despondency and exaltation that ebbed and flowed in Him, while the stars looked mutely on and His Father's angels covered Him with their wings.

Prone upon the stone pavement, with His burning brow buried in His arms, the Boy wrestled with the longing of nature and laid His trouble at the Father's feet, that many a lonely and desolate boy in days to come might find it there and be comforted. At last He slept with Mary's name upon His lips, praying that the Father comfort her where He Himself might not, and sanctify unto her the anguish of her soul and His.

* * *

"Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."¹

The pain of the Mother-heart breaks the solemn hush of the Beth-Midrash. Mary is entirely oblivious

¹ Luke 2:48.

of the august and imposing spectacle of those mighty ones in Israel. Her troubled eyes fall upon the beloved figure of her Son, and all the world vanishes before the holy tempest of her mingled love and sorrow and joy.

It is the cry of long-pent-up anguish, the anguish of unbearably tried love, the anguish in which struggles a mighty joy, divine and human, both sacred, both tenderly welcome to the heart of Mary's Child.

Should not the pain of Mary's heart be laid bare to Mary's Son? Should not His ear be made acquainted with the sweet reproach of love than which no greater ever reigned in mother-breast? Should not these wise men gauge the greatness of the sacrifice the Boy has made for the glory and service of Yahweh by the wounding of such a love as Mary's? What child could abandon such love were He not consumed with the supreme love of the Almighty Father, and guided across the anguish of a mother-heart to the stormy heights of the mission of the Messiah? Weep, Mary, in the sight of the mighty ones of the earth, for God counts every tear a tribute of love to the will of thy Divine Son.

Mary does not question the Boy's motive. She knows He is God, and therefore can do nothing amiss. But, aside from the involuntary cry of her human heart, her anguish pleads for that knowledge which is sure to ease it of its keenest pang. She craves the comfort that only Jesus can give her; her heart is hungry from the travail of its sorrow and it longs for the appeasing love of Jesus, her God. Had He not taught her, as He has taught us, to complain to Him, to give insistent voice to those soft reproaches which love knows how to fashion from the throes of its consuming ardor? Had He

not taught her that all of heaven reigned within the flesh with which she had clothed Him, and was *her* Heaven, as it was her flesh?

It was thus that Mary appealed to her distress, by the rights which He had conferred upon her; the rights of her Queenship in that Divine Heart, as well as of her Motherhood. It was a question full of eager trust as well as of reproach. She knew that Jesus would not have suffered His father and herself to seek Him sorrowing were He not impelled by some superior motive.

Mary also knew that "His Father's business" was the one absorbing passion of her Boy's soul. But she knew that for years to come He was to live in silent preparation for the toils of the ministry, in the seclusion of Nazareth. This departure from the beaten track, this placing Himself at the mercy of the multitude from which He had hitherto so assiduously screened Himself startled and bewildered her watchful heart. How could the world be so blind to that which was so clearly resplendent to her adoring eyes? Mary's heart trembled with the fear of betrayal. Who knows but there was a loving subterfuge in her impulse to cloak the Child from the eyes of the Sanhedrin with the parentage of herself and the "carpenter" from Galilee, and all the sweet natural impulse of her mother-love?

Joseph leaves it all in Mary's hands. The patient pain is welling in his heart; he has borne the pangs of responsibility and the torment of anxiety with the great, noble tolerance which is the flower of his sanctity. Mary's Motherhood, Mary's love, Mary's knowledge of the heart of Jesus will solve all difficulties and win the Child once more to the little home in Galilee. What

Divine intimacies in that holy home the words of Mary reveal to us—"Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

As Jesus turns to her, His face glows with the subdued radiance of the triumph of Eternal Truth, and Mary's lips quiver with the greatness of her rapture and her hand trembles as it rests upon the tumult of her heart. What an immense tenderness of love must have added its light to the face of Jesus as He questioned her:

"How is it that you have sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"²

Gently the Boy reminds His mother that surely, if He strays from her side, He is to be sought only in His Father's house, whither He is drawn by His Father's will. What that will is He could not explain to Mary in the publicity of the Temple; and therefore: "They understood not the word that He spoke unto them."³ But the note of Divine authority manifested itself in His voice and bearing.

Mary and Joseph were spellbound, "And seeing Him, they wondered." But they were thrilled, too, with the power of His supernatural strength and beauty, even as the wise men of Israel had fallen captive, heart and intellect, to His charm. It was one of those revelations which illumine those who live close to the heart of Jesus, and which silence all speech in mute and humble adoration.

In silence, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph withdrew from the presence of the wise men and took their way back to Galilee. It was a pregnant silence for sages and saints, for the words of Jesus were pondered, not only in Mary's heart, but in the secrecy of the councils of

² Ibid. 49.

³ Ibid. 50.

Israel. The wise men looked into one another's eyes, with earnest and troubled gaze. They rolled up the scroll of the Sacred Script and laid it away with lingering hand. In silence they parted in the shadow of the Temple, burdened with unwelcome doubts and haunting fears. Slowly they went their way to ponder long the strange wisdom of the stranger Child.

And the Child, with His hand clasped tight in Mary's, and smiling up at her, caught furtive beams of the tearful joy which flashed from her lovely eyes as the storm of her pain subsided and her fears fled away. How short the way; how lovely the colored mountains. How fresh and billowy the young corn, as it yielded to the sweep of a south wind and the soft thunder of a flight of stately storks across the golden spears.

The world is all God's, and all lovely with the loveliness of His touch, when we walk with Him in the enduring freshness of His love.

GROWTH IN WISDOM, AGE,
AND GRACE

TOWARD evening of the third day the little group of travelers cross the plain of Jezreel and, mounting a steep path through a cleft in the foot hills, reach the lovely valley which leads into Nazareth.

The Boy's eyes fill with delight as He watches the flitting glory of the flamingo and the roller-bird flashing, "like a living sapphire," across the sunset. His tired feet dip into the cool springs of the valley and are buried deep in the thymy sweetness of the hills, until through the ghostly shadows gleam the white houses of the little town, "like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald." So St. Jerome delightfully describes them.

Here the Son of God will spend eighteen more years in obscurity, subjection, and obedience. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."¹ His subjection, now, is entirely voluntary, since He has reached legal majority; in Eastern lands maturity is reached at an early age. In this happy seclusion, the intimate intercourse of the Holy Family is resumed, with the great hills folding back around them, like the leaves of a rose, whose golden heart is the Hidden Life of Nazareth.

¹ Luke 2:51.

What lovelier resting place for the sanctuary of the boyhood and youth of Christ than this city of Galilee? What earthly spot could more enticingly lift its flower-chalice from the secrecy of the hills for the gathering of fondest, holiest memories, and tenderest associations with the Heavenly Child?

It was in this subjection to Mary and Joseph, unceasingly practised here, that Jesus merited for us the increase of grace and wisdom which was to replenish the barrenness of our souls. He manifested and exercised it for us in proportion as He grew in age and as the circumstances of His life called it forth.

When we think of every thought, word, and deed in the daily life of Jesus—each perfect, each infinitely meritorious, each shrined in the complacency of the Father's eyes and each laden with its special grace and blessing—a new world of unlimited richness and beauty rises. It is ours. We look and dream and feed our soul upon it. Then, glancing at our own poor hoard of merit, we smilingly cast it into these great depths, knowing it will be lost and yet found, multiplied and glorified in Him.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man."²

Theologians speak of a triple knowledge possessed by Christ. The first is that of the Beatific Vision, for He beheld God face to face. The second is known as "infused" knowledge. In neither of these ways could He be said to have "advanced in wisdom," for both were perfect in Him from the beginning. Yet, because He only gradually gave external manifestation of the wisdom which was from the first infused into His soul, He could be said to have outwardly advanced in wisdom

² Ibid. 52.

before men, even in proportion as He advanced in age.

But there is a third kind of wisdom in which He did advance in the full sense of the word. This was "acquired" or "experimental" wisdom. Though by the *beatific* wisdom Christ knew all things from the first moment of His existence, and though in His *infused* knowledge He was from the first absolutely perfect and so could not increase, yet *by experience* He could still constantly gain a new acquired knowledge of the things about Him. Experience, of its very nature, is gradual.

"Therefore," writes St. Thomas, "Christ did not from the beginning know all things, but gradually, and after some time, namely, in perfect age. This is plain from the fact that the Evangelist groups together the statements that He advanced in wisdom and age."³

Christ not only received new sense experiences, but also acquired new experimental knowledge. The gradual outward manifestations of His infused knowledge would further account for the progressive external development described throughout these chapters.

For understanding this, we have the beautiful comparison of the sun whose light never increases in reality, yet whose beams are constantly changing as they appear to us. We see them: rosy in the early dawn, softly mellow with the breaking day, golden in the rich effulgence of the morning sky, splendorous through the mounting hours, and dazzling bright in the noonday heavens. In itself the sun has undergone no change, its own full radiance has ever been the same, though only increasingly beheld by us. So the infused knowledge of Christ, ever the same, was only slowly manifested, from the first endearing prattle of His childish years to the

³ 3 p., q. 12, art. 2, ad 1.

brilliant wisdom of His ripened manhood, when men said wonderingly to one another: "Never yet man spoke like unto this Man."

Similarly, there could be no internal growth of grace in the soul of Christ. He advanced in grace as He advanced in infused knowledge, by manifesting ever more fully that plenitude which He possessed from the beginning. Throughout His life He showed forth by degrees the virtues becoming Him as child, as boy, as youth, and as ideal man. But within His Soul grace remained the same. Never was He wanting in the full beauty and richness of its perfection.

* * *

It is a discipline for Mary to suffer the relinquishment of those long sweet hours of solitary companionship with her Boy; it is discipline for Joseph to assume the dread, though adorable, task of teaching the Son of God the rude trade of a humble carpenter; it is a discipline for Jesus to adapt His divine faculties to the toil and drudgery of the workshop, and come, as now He must, into closer contact with the common, sordid elements of fallen human nature, involving much that must be painful to the exquisite purity of His Sacred Heart. He is to exercise perfect control of every repulsion and aversion, every gesture and expression, and so merit for us during the eighteen years of hidden sanctity in the discipline of Nazareth those special graces whereof we stand in need during all our daily life.

Jesus is not only to endure all this with the heroism of a patient heart, but He is to stretch out His pure young hands, with their hidden spirit of healing, to remedy the sin and misery of troubled lives. He is to

touch men with the secret grace which is light to the understanding and strength to the will and a strong sweet impulse in the ways of God. He is to draw near to them in the touching trust of youth, which appeals more strongly than the wisdom of age to the best and noblest instincts of the human heart, and smile into the faces of these Nazarenes His own sunny smile in which Heaven seems to rest.

Many a hard and sinful hand will be gently laid upon that stainless brow of the Boy Christ, while troubled eyes look long and wistfully into the pure face which does not shrink from the sullied touch, but fills the soul of the wearied sinner with strange deep yearnings for the radiant beauty of the perfect life. Jesus will pray to the Father for all those needy souls and leave the blessing of His love behind.

If we have walked in sinful ways, and the Holy Child should come in the shadows of the night, we would also dare to press our hand upon His brow and turn the pure face to our own, that we might breathe its healing and its balm. We would gaze into the limpid depths of its angelic beauty, until our heart melts in an anguish of remorse, and our soul lies captive at His blessed feet.

What if our first impulse be to shrink and cower at the mute and trustful love of His lifted eyes. It is a good pain; the pain of a holy shame; a pain that will wring from our soul its last remnant of pride, vainglory, and self-love, that it may be His own, pliant and pure for His beautifying touch. We need not fear that He will draw away, that His pain will shrink from ours, that His face will flush with our shame, and His brow contract with the fever of our guilty hand. His innocence

is the white shield of His knowledge, His love will triumph over His woe, and we shall find in His face only the inspiration of the higher life and the light of the Spirit of God.

THE JUST MAN JOSEPH

IT IS not difficult to picture the little workshop in which Jesus toiled with Joseph. There was a sunny corner at the back which looked out upon the hills, where the Boy had His bench and tools, and where Joseph's eyes would often wander to watch the sunbeams weaving a halo in His golden hair.

There, too, he would meet the gaze of eyes filled with the tender thoughts of a fresh young soul.

Father Faber tells us how the hand of Joseph lay upon the hand of God, guiding it in its self-appointed task. Our soul is hushed in mighty awe and wonder, as we look upon the little hand that suffers itself to be pressed and guided over the rough board by Joseph's hard and toilworn fingers. Then, as we raise our eyes, we watch in Joseph's calm and saintly face the flush of many and great thoughts, and wonder at the silent mastery of his will, at the simple fidelity of his patient heart to the common duties of daily life.

It must have cost unceasing effort for Joseph, son of kings and foster-father to the King of kings, to train himself to such fidelity in the humble tasks of the life whereby the Son of God was to fulfil His destiny. He looked upon the royal hands of God, as they struggled with the rough work and bore their bruises and their

soil; he looked upon the young shoulders carrying their burden of wood and tools, the coarse garments and the sweet flushed face which bent above the lowly work; and he saw, within, the glory and majesty of the King's Son, the unspeakable beauty of His servitude and humiliation in the strong, fair toils of love.

No scepter lay in those little hands; no crown was on His head; no ermine robes hung from His shoulders—yet He was every inch the King's Son! On His face was visible the unruffled sweetness and gentle dignity of a soul perfectly at peace, and the unbroken consciousness of the Royalty which reigned within. Time and again the soul of Joseph reached out to serve where it should command, and fell in gentle confusion under the apparently unconscious gaze of the Divine Son. Then Joseph would turn and busy himself about the shop, while the Boy worked on in the silence of His father's love.

There were times also when the two drew near each other in the fashioning of their work, and drifted into talk of Mary: Mary's sweetness, the lovely charm of her gracious ways, the radiant smile that lighted up her face as they turned up the little walk and found her in the glory of the setting sun. And Jesus would tell His father of the many pretty ways in which she sought to give Him unexpected pleasure; of the tales she told Him, in inspired and glowing words, of the heroes of His race, the warriors of Israel, and the great deeds of the Persian wars; how she wove about them her own lovely fancies, and drew from them the Father's truths; how she pictured Esther to Him reigning by the might of virtue, and Judith conquering for her people and bringing them salvation through her valiant strength of

soul. Joseph, then, would tell in turn how she drew her words of wisdom and burning love from the secret treasures of her own most wonderful heart and made those old tales live afresh in the strong and heavenly life that flowed within her soul. Then the two would fall into a long silence, lost in the love and wonders of Mary; and each would read in his own way the deepening characters and hidden riches of her perfect being.

The simple, steadfast silence of Joseph and his unquestioning adherence to the line of conduct which the Holy Spirit inspired were tested and tried day by day more deeply, as the Boy grew in grace and wisdom and entered more closely into His father's loving heart. All day long the two worked in the intimacy of their toil, and thought and deed sprang up under the same impulse and followed the same supreme end.

It was the profound consciousness of his unworthiness which frequently sealed the lips of Joseph, for he was "a just man," and humility is but a true appreciation of our relationship to God. None the less, the great man's soul would press against the bar, yearning for hidden and holy things as his forefathers yearned for the milk and honey of the Promised Land. All through that heroic silence the divine eyes of the quiet Boy were fixed with infinite content and love upon the aspiring soul and toiling hands of His earthly father, rejoicing in His great strides heavenward along strenuous ways of sanctity toward the joy and glory that awaited him, in the kingdom of the Just.

Mary, also, knew something of that hidden struggle. And when the Child had gone to rest, weary with the hard day's toil, she drew nearer to her spouse and whispered the sweet comfort of her loving heart to allay

the tired forces of his patient soul. That whisper bore with it, like "the north wind and the south wind" of the Canticle, all the strength and vigor and fragrance of the aromatical spices in the garden of the Beloved. Under this sacred spell his tense soul would relax, in perfect rhythm with the gentle music of Mary's harmonious spirit, and the just man rested in the peace of God.

Little is required—a delicate touch suffices to time a perfect instrument whose strings have slipped through constant pressure of the human hand. How skilled was Mary's hand, how light her touch, how exquisite the harmony she drew from the yielding strings of that love-laden instrument, the soul of her virginal spouse. Her fair hand lingered in the rapture of those holy chants, while God smiled and the angels listened.

In all the years of close companionship between Mary and Joseph, through every test of pain and joy, amid the hardships of exile and the drudgery of daily life, the wonder of their perfect love never waned, its glowing colors never faded, its charm never vanished, its existence never fell to the colorless level of the commonplace. And the reason was clear to see. It sprang from the very bosom of God, flowing thence into human channels. It had but one Source and one mode of existence. It was celestially free from the trammels of the flesh and lived in the crystalline stability of spiritual light, it knew not age nor suffered the shadow of decline.

Joseph's quiet strength of soul, manifested in endurance of body, stability of temperament, and the patience of a disciplined character, was a constant source of admiration to his holy spouse. Her love went out to him in a sweet dependence, such as only the strong and self-reliant can call forth and fully appreciate; which

made his responsibilities light and his anxieties bearable, and doubled his strength in the heat of conflict and his joy in time of peace. It kept sweet and active the hidden springs of tenderness in Joseph's manly nature, that Mary's lips might never thirst, and that the wounds she suffered from contact with the world might steep their fever in the healing waters of his love. And Mary drank and thanked God for the wondrous fashioning of that great soul of Joseph, whose depths, filled with the riches of God, her love discovered day by day. They were one in spirit and one in God. While Mary bestowed upon him the tenderness of her dependence, Joseph conferred upon her the comfort of his strength. In all things, that quiet interchange of love constantly operated in this ideal world.

With each day Joseph grew more dear to Mary's heart. As the years flowed on, so quietly, so undiversified in outward events, so rich in the unfolding of the spiritual life which lay lapped upon the glimmering tide of the Holy Child's Divinity, Mary learned to love more deeply the saintly soul of Joseph. The rarely beautiful character of his mission and the perfection of his conformity with its grandly simple requirements flooded her heart with a reverent affection, and opened noble vistas into the great soul which seemed in its humility to hide its beauty from its own unstartled consciousness.

As her love looked out from Mary's eyes, Joseph would lay her slender hand upon his own rough palm, and remind her humbly that as hers was created for the service of the Infant God, so was his made to labor for the King and Queen of Heaven. Its toil was that which from all eternity had been decreed and bore the blessing and the glory of the eternal years. And Mary told

him it was fashioned after the Father's own, whose patience and goodness, whose beauty and strength were traced in every rugged line. In years to come the toiling world might see and ponder that hand of Joseph, and joyously lay its hand in his for faithful help and guidance.

About them hovered the sense of being guided, silently, but irresistibly, in thought and deed, by the Holy Child. In His absolute subjection was an underlying power which radiated from His Divine Personality, and exercised its quiet force upon their highly spiritual life.

As the moon, in a serene and lofty sky, governs the sweep of the mighty tides, yet yields to them the fulness of its silver beauty till all the waters gleam from coast to coast, so the life of the Divine Child, in its beauty and supernatural light, shone ever more resplendent over the waters of their souls, until that beauty became a living force to draw them almost irresistibly along the high and perfect way of God's Will. Their liberty, indeed, remained, that they might serve God freely, but they were, in its most profound sense, captured and drawn by the Divinity in Christ that is wisdom as well as loveliness, providence as well as sweetness, harmony as well as light, and which contains eminently all virtues in the fulness of their splendor.

As these holy souls expanded to the power of the Divine Presence and grew more yielding to Its tranquil sway, they mirrored ever more perfectly that Divine Principle which governs yet is governed by its own most perfect law.

Happy Mary! Happy Joseph! to be so joined in that mutual love of holy wedlock whose bond was the Spirit of God, the Divine Spirit of Love Itself. Only thus can

we have the perfection of the Christian home, in which the children whom God may grant shall precious grow up in the likeness of the Christ Child, with the love of the Saviour deep in their hearts and constantly advancing like Him "in wisdom and age and grace with God and men."

But there were times when Mary and Joseph looked forward together to the day when the silence of those boyish lips of Christ should at last be broken and His words would flood the world with new revelations of beauty and truth. They knew not how it would all come about, yet they knew that His victory was secure; they knew that the light of Truth would kindle and burn, and would blaze forth under the quiet power of the Hidden Hand. And Mary knew, in their mutual love, how the shadow of the Great Sacrifice hung over them, for the vision of the Lamb of God, immolated for us, not seldom shone in the gentle face of Jesus to wring the hearts that held Him close in their adoring love. This, too, it was which drew them together ever more intimately.

The love of Mary and Joseph, centered as it was in Christ alone, must for all time be the model of every wedded love which maid and man shall pledge each other, that it may last through life, and its fruit may be garnered up for them unto all eternity.

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

AS JESUS grew to manhood a strong, active comradeship sprang up between Him and His foster father.

Friendship, with the grace of perfect freedom, lay its consecrating touch upon paternal and filial love, and broke down those necessary and inevitable barriers between age and youth, authority and subjection. The love of personal choice affiliated itself with the love of nature, making one of the most perfect relationships known to the human heart. There was the thrill of a new joy in the interchange of confidence, of work and leisure time, of sorrow and of joy; the knowledge of perfect understanding added to the old trust; the silent delight of meeting upon equal ground; a gratitude both humble and proud, and a love both reverent and unrestrained.

Aside from the affairs of their own humble little kingdom of the workshop, Jesus and Joseph considered the affairs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Here, as Joseph's years drew to their close, Son turned counselor to father, and in filial love, through secret ways and by means divine, gently and reverently led him from the poverty and trial of the earthly realm to the riches and reward of Heaven. With the living hope of Eternal Beatitude burning in the soul of Joseph, Christ was to send him on before, not as yet to enter the Celestial

City, but to await His coming. For no one could now enter the Eternal Portals until these were flung wide at the triumphant advent of the King of kings, Victor over sin and death, and ascending into glory with His saints.

He sent him on before. What tenderness in the sending; what light to guide him through the shadows of death; what safety, with the toil-worn hands of Joseph in the warm, strong hand of Jesus. What comfort in this prayer and promise for the weary soul to lean upon.

A short time of waiting with the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, and he would look at last upon that Heaven which had really lived beside him, behind walls of flesh, for all those years. Its beauty had flashed with blinding glory upon his veiled eyes; its harmonies, muffled yet exquisitely suggestive, had fallen upon his ears. Near as it had all been to him in those long loving years, how suddenly near, with a thrilling nearness, must it have seemed now, as death let down the mortal bars, softly, one by one, and the spirit trembled onward through the breathless dawn into that vast realm of the just of all the ages, who there were awaiting the coming of the Saviour God, his own Foster Son, of Whom he should bring to them authentic word.

A few more years, and the ineffable splendors of the Soul of Christ, descending from Calvary, would thrill these regions of the saints, and they would issue forth to participate with Him forever in the triumph of His Risen Glory. How lofty then and near to Christ forevermore would be the place of Joseph. Still a few more years, and Mary, too, would once more be united with Jesus and with Him, and that Trinity of Earth would be resplendently enthroned in the eternal joys of Heaven.

Then would he know the deep, full beatitude of the eternal embrace of the Living Arms of God. Then, at last, would he see Him face to face, and not merely through the veils of that Humanity in which he had known Him here below.

Oh, that wonderful knowledge of God granted to His saints in Heaven, that knowledge drawn from vision and possession, where faith and hope slip away forever and love alone remains, where God is all in all!

The spirit of the just man passed from earth, followed by the loving gaze of Jesus and Mary, with the kiss of God and His Blessed Mother to seal his lips till they should be loosed again to chant the praises of Eternal Love.

There had been no death in all the world so favored as that of Joseph. God was with him in the flesh to minister to every need of human weakness; and He was with him in the lethargy of the soul, to lay His hand upon its loosening bonds. There was no painful struggle to keep the wings of the spirit poised in the Presence of its God. God was there in human form; and surely, in this holiest of all the hours of Joseph's life, Heaven shone through the eyes of Jesus as never dying eyes beheld It on earth before. In that perfect joy, Mary, too, participated, while the tender mutual love of two virgin hearts received its last ardent and glorifying touch. Human love was crowned in the splendor of the love of God.

* * *

Gently Jesus lays His hand upon Mary's bowed head and softly whispers her dear name through the holy silence.

Ah, the blessed, comforting, life-giving whisper of

God. Mary looks up into the face of Jesus, and rises with a startled joy.

There is constantly something new, something unexpected, something which enraptures the heart in the exquisite grace and perfection of God's consolations and endearments during trial. There is no earthly joy that can compare with them, for they are born of Heaven and bear no resemblance to anything we have seen or heard. It is God, and God's way; a way as infinitely various as it is invariably perfect, and which startles because it opens new and unexpected deeps, not only into our knowledge of God Himself, but into our relationship with Him. All this, in immeasurable degree, must Mary have experienced in that blessed moment of Christ's consolation, as she mourned the passing from her earthly life of him who had shared her burdens and her joys, all sacred, all holy, and who had been to her the object of the most saintly love of man and wife this earth has ever known.

There was new love and beauty for Mary in the face of Jesus. Her pure soul trembled through her grief at His Divine call. Within the glory of His countenance dawned for her a vision of the new life He had prepared, when, alone with Him, He was to be to her what He had never been before. The memory of her holy spouse would linger on like an odor of sweetness, a treasure of beauty, within her soul, until she should be reunited eternally with him; but in the meantime Jesus in His affection would even more wonderfully clothe her, as "a bride adorned for the Bridegroom," the stars of His glory upon her brow, and the moon of His love beneath her feet.

They laid their dead to rest, his body under the lilies

of Galilee and his royal soul in "the bosom of Abraham," until Christ Himself in His hour of triumph should lead him to his great reward.

With her head upon the Heart of Jesus, Mary listens to the promise: "I am the Resurrection and the Life!" And as she hears His words, she listens also to the strong, deep, throbbing of that Life, her own life cradled upon its mighty pulse and seeming to lie in touch with the universal life of creation. Life. God. Jesus. She possesses all in Him as we, too, may draw the fulness of all life and love and joy from the Divine Heart of the Saviour Christ.

Mary turns from the bewildering glory of her ecstasy to look again on the quiet face of the dead; and Jesus once more whispers to her the unspoken thought: "I am the Resurrection!"

We must sleep to wake; die to live. For the souls of the elect, death is a transition; and in the last day the Son of God will Himself reanimate the dormant substance of their bodies and transmute them into the wonder of "the body glorified." Body and soul, they shall show forth resplendently as stars through all eternity the glory of their Creator.

If we could really see, as Mary saw in all the brightness of the supernatural light and truth of Jesus, that our dead who died in Christ really but sleep in the sweet and watchful care of God, that body as well as soul is destined to shadow forth His glory, we should then grow truly wise in grief, content in pain, and find in Jesus' arms all and even more than we have lost.

As Mary lay upon the breast of Jesus, He unfolded to her the minor meanings of the life of Joseph, and she saw more and more clearly the perfect roundness

and completeness of it all. She followed the divine finger as it traced the full sum of Joseph's mortal existence within the limits of its natural term, all rarely perfect, symmetrical, harmonious. And there, in ever more glorious and more comprehensive outline, she saw the relations of that life to God. She understood more fully than ever the supernatural purposes constantly realized in Joseph's faithful correspondence with the silent, hidden, but luminous operation of divine grace.

The planet holds the satellite with a resistless, invisible power, keeping its motions in order with the perfect law of its orbit, governing its every revolution and endowing it with its celestial light. The soul of Joseph, by free correspondence of its will, no less faithfully traced its course of life about a central Orb, the Sun of Divine Love. Now, as the Spirit of Death swept clear from the heaven of Mary's eyes the veils and shadows of earth, she beheld how that soul of Joseph had continually been growing in splendor and magnitude. And she looked at Jesus, her eyes alight with the pure joy and beauty of her vision, for He Himself had wiped away her tears and had refreshed her with the living waters of eternal life.

Short was the parting with her beloved; the reunion would be eternal. Precious, indeed, in the sight of God is the death of His saints.

May we never fail each day to repeat that beautiful prayer:

Jesus! Mary! Joseph!
I give you my heart and my soul!

Jesus! Mary! Joseph!

Assist me at the hour of my death!

Jesus! Mary! Joseph!

May I die in your sweet embrace!

HER SON: HER GOD

AS DAY draws to its close and all the busy sounds of the village gather about the hearth-stones of the cottage homes, Mary's song grows softer and softer with the sweetness of expectant love, and her deft hands make ready for the coming of Jesus. Her eyes study every detail upon which His eyes will rest, and her hand lingers on what His hand will touch. She labors to give Him that secret comfort in which His weariness may find relief while His soul is free to climb the eternal hills.

As the moments lag, Mary reverently lifts the curtains of His simple room and smooths once more the rude couch whereon the Son of God shall find His humble rest. She gently mourns the day when she cradled His little tenderness in the warm sweet comfort of her breast and cooed the sorrow from His Baby-heart.

But the shadows grow heavy between those days and these, and chill with the forecast of that other couch which waits beyond the hills of Juda in the dim silence of an empty tomb. Vague forms of kneeling angels limn themselves in the deadly gloom, and droop about the heart of Mary, to stir the sword sheathed in her mother-breast.

Suddenly she turns. Her trained ear catches the soft

fall of feet. Already His hand is on the latch, but there is a moment's pause as His eyes are raised to the kingdom of His Father. He enters, laying down His tools, and silently takes her in His arms. Mary wonders, while she rests against His heart, how that kingdom beyond the stars can hold a more resplendent beauty and diviner joy than this. There is no need of words as she raises her pillowed head and looks into His tenderly smiling eyes. Mary's heart is an open script to them.

He is her God from Whose thought she issued, from Whom she has her being, upon Whose will her soul is poised in an ecstasy of dread delight. He is her God Who rules and governs her, Who possesses her with the power of Divinity. And yet she sees that same power, self-contained, lie as if passive at *her* will, and yield to her behest that which her spirit craves.

Jesus looks down into the peace and bliss of her hallowed face and tells how His love so abides in her that henceforth all nations may gather about and call her blessed, and may seek Him through the glory of her peerless life.

Day by day He notes in her the wonderful unfolding of heart and soul, the blossoming of an immortal flower. Mary stands responsive to His love, yielding up to the gentle pressure of His grace the deepest, sweetest secrets of her being. And then, at last, the pure eyes lift the burden of their love, and there is the light of God upon them, while the pure lips murmur: "Lord, I am not worthy!"

As Mary bows her head, the words from the Book of Esther come to mind: "And as she held her peace, he took the golden scepter, and laid it upon her neck, and kissed her, and said: 'Why dost thou not speak to me?'

She answered: 'I saw thee, my lord, . . . and my heart was troubled for fear of thy majesty.'"¹

Mary's heart and intellect followed with unwavering fidelity the revelations of God's guiding light. Through the complexities of flesh and spirit, the weariness and harassment at times of a straitened family life, as well as the ever-present tragedy of the Redemption, Mary walked in simple security, whithersoever the divine light guided her. In all the little sufferings of poverty and deprivation, which formed the stern sweet discipline of the Hidden Life, Mary learned the secret way to the higher joys which they contained. And when with His gentle smile, Jesus slipped His empty, toil-worn hand into the tender comfort of her own, and the beautiful weary face stooped for her caressing touch, Mary drew Him silently to the little hearth, knowing that the spiritual banquet which they would share together would silence the flesh and chasten it with abounding grace.

How different from the banquetings of the world were those spiritual feasts of Mary, side by side with Jesus. The gate of the garden of the Beloved was set ajar, and the ever new, refreshing world of its delights unveiled itself for her delectation.

That garden was indeed for Mary the illimitable mind of God, and she walked its pathways hand in hand with the Incarnate Word, contemplating through Him the sublime beauty of its activities, the exquisite adjustment of its perfections, and the depths of its mysteries. Above all, she saw there the vast sun-drenched, grace-inundated world of love in which reigns the heavenly providence behind every deed of the Creative Hand.

¹ Esther 15:15-16.

It was that Hand which now closed softly upon her own as His Spirit closed upon her soul. What wonder that the babble and distractions of the busy world lay hushed outside the splendor of those golden bars; and that Mary walked, hand in hand, and all in all with Jesus.

To keep "the eyes of her heart" fixed upon Jesus during those holy hours of mental prayer was no effort for Mary. There were no distractions strong enough to lure her from the absorbing beauty of the face of God or the sweetness of His converse. The eyes of her body and the eyes of her soul feasted uninterruptedly, and their hunger was filled.

There are times when in the midst of fervor, our thoughts slip unaware away from the empire of our will, and Christ Himself recalls them, with all the patience of the Good Shepherd in search of His wandering sheep. We feel His presence steal about us like a heavenly atmosphere; the trail of His garments gently drawn across our feet; the faint sweet fragrance of His breath upon our cheek; a sudden radiance of supernatural light upon our soul; the cool, sure touch of His kiss of peace upon our lips, or the subtle touch of His hand upon our brow. Mary's thoughts might wander too, and the Shepherd seek them as He seeks our own, but it was always within the pasture of His love.

In these communings with the Beloved was there a sweet wilfulness with which she sought to veil from His eyes the dread vision of His Passion and the tragic retribution of man's iniquity which must engulf Him in unspeakable woe? Did she seek, with the quick inspiration of her womanly heart and an exquisite delicacy of spiritual intuition, to divert Him with the charm of

her love and the seraphic ardor of her worship, to woo Him with the joy of her perfect soul?

Not in vain, for thirty years, had she studied the face of Jesus. She knew every line, every lineament. She read every fleeting emotion, every abiding trait that depicted itself in the majestic beauty of His countenance. And using all the deftness of her human and spiritual affection, she ruled, through the dear prerogative by which Christ Himself was voluntarily "subject" to her, with the golden scepter of her Queenly love, while Jesus, smiling, yielded to her will and sipped the cup of comfort from her hand.

What a thousand traits of endearing emotions are contained in that brief Scripture line assuring us that He was subject to her. In the tender helplessness of His infancy, in the impulsive vigor of His youth, in the full maturity of His manhood, He is still subject to her sweet dominion. There was but one exception, the Temple scene, when He was called from on high and must be about His Father's business.

In Queen and Subject all was love. How sweet her tyranny over the heart of Jesus, how generous and joyous His submission. For does she not but anticipate His every wish and forestall His every action? Are not her thoughts and words, her gentle commands and tender endearments, inspired by Jesus Himself? Is she not the secret, yielding instrument of His inspirations, and yet the actual sovereign of those thirty years of His Hidden Life? And Jesus never contradicted. There was no need, no possibility. Her commands themselves were worship, and "the Lord of all things loved her."

JESUS OF NAZARETH

CHRIST, as Man and God, was never idle. His mission began with the first moment of His Incarnation and found incessant activity among the souls He had come to save. He prayed and worked, and upon those bases founded the whole of Christian life. But what must have been the power of His own prayer and the perfection of His works.

Somehow the Hidden Life is in a most especial manner a subject of contemplation for lovers of Christ. He called upon apostles and disciples to serve as instruments for the bestowal and interpretation of His Word. But in the deep and silent Hidden Life, recorded "not upon tablets of stone but upon the tablets of the heart," He has left an additional, more intimate world of love for eyes that search to penetrate the very soul of Christ.

If we live upon the surface of His life we may be His friends, admirers, brothers even, but never in the supreme sense of that word, His lovers. To understand, within the limits of our power, the consuming love which broke forth from time to time during the brief years of His ministry, we should study its course through the long years of its silent travail, and there wonder over and ponder its mystery.

How often, at the cottage door in Nazareth, came a timid knock, and the pitiful accents of misery calling the Master's name? How many a hand was thrust into His and drew Him forth, even from the hearing of Mary, into the dread of night and the silence of the sleeping village? How many a choking voice lifted its burden to His attentive ear and stifled its sobs upon His breast, out there in the darkness where the shame and misery of the burning face were sheltered in merciful shadows and the mantle of His protecting love?

The purity and dignity of His presence, the inscrutable holiness of His bearing—did they check the wanton word and the headlong passions of men? Did he produce on them the same effect that His Eucharistic presence produces upon us as we enter in and draw near the Holy of Holies where He resides? The solemnity of God is upon us there, and we feel slipping from our soul the spirit of the world. About us is the peace of His repose, the security of His power, the bliss of His love. The complexities of life are resolved in the presence of the majestic simplicity of God.

For those who crossed His path in Nazareth, was there the indescribable atmosphere of spiritual charm, subtle and sweet like a breath of heaven? His words wrote themselves in the memory of men. Someone was soon to say: "Never did man speak like this Man."¹ And yet so brief was His discourse, so simple His speech, the children stopped to listen and hung upon the beauty of His words.

Yes, it was the children who called forth the love of Christ in its deepest sweetness. A little wounded cry wrung from a baby-breast sped like an arrow to the core

¹ John 7:46.

of His heart, and the divine hands let fall their most urgent work to gather into the comfort of His arms the tiny sufferer. He was a child again, with the woes of babyhood upon Him. His breast thrilled with the flutter of the wee heart against it; His eyes filled with tears at the little grief-drenched eyes; and He pressed the quivering lips and stilled them in the tenderness of His kiss. He was a child again, with the cold wind searching the cave of Bethlehem, and He felt again the pressure of His Mother's arms, closer, closer, with the pulsing of her heart and the warmth of her kisses and all the dear comfort of her breast. And the babe in His arms nestled closer, smiled and cooed and raised its dimpled fingers to the Saviour's face, and fell asleep in His embrace.

We sometimes wonder how Jesus looked upon the sin of Nazareth and passed it by and held His peace. What anguish must have wrung that divine heart; what an unendurable desire to stay the sinner, to right the wrong, to rescue the soul upon the brink of the abyss. Sin hurt Him with a pain that was physical as well as mental and spiritual. The great white purity and rectitude of His soul shrank from it with repulsion and the fire of His zeal blazed with a holy and consuming indignation. And yet, how accurately He drew the delicate and difficult line between the sinner and the sin. How profound was His hatred of the one, how abounding His love for the other.

When shall we strip our blinded eyes of passion and prejudice, and, in our relations with the sinner walk in the light of Christ's dear truth? Until we do so we shall never enter into His designs and the spirit of His ministry, with its surpassing love that suffered and for-

gave, and sought to reconcile all with the justice and mercy crowning it.

It hurts to think that there was sin in Nazareth—that stainless flower set among the hills of Galilee. And Christ's eyes watched it with the pain of a daily crucifixion. There are some sins we would hardly have dared to associate with Christ's mercy had He not bid us stoop with Him and rescue their victims in the very face of public hostility. We sometimes hold our breath at the fearless power of such charity.

What relief, then, to turn His steps homeward—to Mary's home, the stainless sanctuary in which His soul delights; to the utter purity and freedom and ideal love of Mary's presence. We fancy seeing an unconscious hastening of His step, a quickening of His breath, and an anticipation of irrepressible relief now struggling with the divine pity of His face. . . . He crosses the threshold and stands before her, and looks down into the calm purity of her eyes.

Something troubles Him. What mother's heart could not divine it? Mary rises. Tenderly she goes to Him (O, heavenly privilege of the Mother of Christ!) and lays her head upon His breast, and waits. . . . It is one of His adorable human moments when Christ gathers the weakness and dependence of mankind to Himself, and sanctifies them in His own human needs. There, in the perfect sympathy of Mary's love, He distils the honey and the myrrh that mingle in His heart. In the pure springs of her crystal soul Jesus steeps His pain and is refreshed.

It would seem that Christ waited for the full maturity of His physical powers, as these slowly ripened under the fostering care of Mary and through the experimental

knowledge He acquired, before entering upon His active mission, as though—how can we say it!—He would give us of His best.

It was as though He felt compelled to steep Himself deeper in all those qualities and circumstances and experiences which constitute human life; life in itself, and that to which it tends. He wished to walk the earth with human feet, to touch it with human hands, to look into men's eyes with human knowledge, to speak to our hearts with a voice whose music should ring with the fullest human chords, that He might re-establish for all time the ruptured concord between flesh and spirit.

Christ willed also, through those long thirty years—for this, too, accords with the human way of learning He assumed—to imbibe from Mary's perfect nature that potent charm which appealed so unfailingly to the hearts of the women of the Gospel, and whose sweetness steals to us across the ages with the freshness of immortality and as an inspiration all divine.

THE PARTING

IT WAS one of those perfect nights when the stars grew light in their watches "and rejoiced and shined forth to Him that made them." Mary's soul, more beautiful than they, burned like a white lamp in the presence of Jesus.

The time was not far distant when her Son was to enter upon His Public Ministry, and one thing He still wished to tell her before that moment came. Silently He drew her to His heart, as they stood beneath the open heavens, and revealed to her something of the mysteries of His Eternal Love for her.

With the plain of Jezreel below, and the quiet stars above, He told her how in "the womb of the eternal years" the thought of God conceived her as not yet in the flesh, how His Love delighted in her, how His Wisdom planned her free from every stain of sin, and how at last His will decreed the creation of her immaculate being, strong and delicate, and wrought throughout with the surpassing beauty of divine workmanship.

From eternity, the Uncreated Word rested with complacency in the divinely generated thought of her, and abode therein until time should bring the instant when He would take substance from her and dwell in the

pure temple of her stainless flesh. "Thou art all fair, O My love, and there is not a spot in thee!"¹

He told her how, from the topmost pinnacle of His eternal bliss, He had desired her, whom He loved above all creatures, that He might prepare within her breast that mystic nuptial chamber where the espousals of Divinity with humanity should take place—the union of the nature of God, represented in the Invisible Word, with the nature of man, represented by Mary, the Ever-Virgin Mother. And the heart of Mary thrilled at God's Love for men.

He told her how, when the fulness of time had come, He had set her among the sons of men, a lily among thorns. But His Spirit guarded her with the eye of "a jealous God." And He preserved untainted the fair unfolding of her soul. "Lest any hurt come of it, I keep it night and day."²

He told her how, with infinite tenderness, He had watched her little feet pace back and forth among the shadows of the Temple, His Presence closing ever more intimately about her life. Her ear was ravished by the mystic music of His voice; her soul was filled by an imminent sense of divine manifestation that haunted the silence of her heart. A luminous clarity of vision and a keen understanding of the words and ways of God possessed her mind. She became alert to the faintest whisper of His inspirations.

He told her how He had watched the first sweet dawn, in her childish soul, of that dominant desire of her race for the Messiah that He might come to deliver it from its bonds. He saw, indeed, the sullen clouds of error and perversity which threatened to distort and to eclipse

¹ Cant. 4:7.

² Is. 27:3.

the truth of the Messianic prophecy. But her soul paid no heed to these and rose untroubled, in unsullied purity of faith, to the zenith of the Prophets' loftiest hopes. "For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace. . . . I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp."³

Least of all did she surmise that she herself would be the Mother of the King, although even then, unknown to her soul, He had crowned the courage of her victorious desires.

"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation: and with the robe of justice He hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels."⁴

All this was true, and yet Mary in her humility thought only of the favor God would do her were she chosen for the handmaid of the favored one who should be Mother of the Messiah King. He looked into her eyes and whispered: "Yet a little while, Beloved, and I am with thee." Mystic words whose import, even then, Mary could not comprehend.

Then He told her how He had watched her soul expand and reach out toward the extent of His all-engrossing love for men; how with the pain of it that soul waxed strong and faint by turns; how it wrought within itself a sanctuary for His promised Incarnation, and within her arms a refuge where His every woe and joy should fly in time to come.

Evermore, her beauty and her goodness grew, straight and fair, in the sight of Heaven, oblivious of the thorns which compassed her about. And the perfume of her virtues rose in mystic and piercing sweetness to the

³ Is. 62:1.

⁴ Ibid. 61:10.

Throne of the Most High and wrapped Him in its fragrance.

Her pleading soul looked up to Him and her prayers ascended from lips steeped in the balm of grace. The Divine Heart Itself melted with the fervor of her desires. The flame of her love made still more fair and delectable His purpose that was to answer to the universal need of men, until He was straitened beyond endurance for the Redemption which He was to accomplish, and He hastened with a yearning that was not to be denied. "The voice of my Beloved, behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains."⁵

He told her that never so holy a moment had rung through the choirs of Heaven as that of her silent victory over the Heart of God, when He came at her *Fiat* and yielded Himself captive to her love. "My Beloved to me and I to Him, who feedeth among the lilies."⁶

And He told her, in fine, of the graces He bestowed upon her during those nine long months of uninterupted and exclusive possession, when hour by hour, through day and night, the ceaseless sanctities inundating His soul made music in her being and sanctified each pulse of her mothering life. "Full of grace," He had declared her through His angel, and therefore immaculate at His first coming to her. But her soul now was "like a watered garden and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail,"⁷ and through it all shone the glory of the Uncreated Light.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God . . . and the Word was made flesh."⁸

* * *

⁵ Cant. 2:8.

⁶ Ibid. 2:16.

⁷ Is. 58:11.

⁸ John 1:1, 14.

What He had come to accomplish was now nearing fulfilment: first His parting with Mary; then His public Ministry; and lastly, Calvary. Soon those Thirty Golden Years would end, which He had spent with Mary. But the faith, the confidence, the love, the complete self-oblation practised through all those years would never fail her now.

"Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."⁹

* * *

November in Galilee. Even the flower of Netzer droops in its sheltered bed, and its sweet face grows pallid with snow-light from distant Libanus. The spice of the Cedar no longer journeys upon the wanton wind but lies in a frozen grip of ice. Jesus tells His Mother it is like the hearts of men which He must liberate from the chill of death by the warm breath of His consuming love. "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden and let the aromatical spices thereof flow!"¹⁰

With that He turns His face and up to Him surge the voices of His beloved souls, far down in the arid places of the world. How can He defend Himself against that importunate cry? When was the heart of Jesus ever known to resist the plea of love or pain? Had He not clothed His Godhead in flesh, and wrought for His outraged justice the velvet mantle of mercy, that He might now abandon Himself to the will of our stricken souls and lay down His life at their behest?

Up to the somber hills He lifts His eyes. Their barren

⁹ Is. 62:3.

¹⁰ Cant. 4:16.

arms would seem to bar the far horizon of His Father's Kingdom, and, prison-like, to close about His straitened heart. Helplessly the white petals of the fair Flower of Galilee fall, like Mary's love, about the Saviour's feet; and from the hills of Judah floats a voice in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."¹¹

At hand is the day when the golden curtains of that Hidden Life must drop, when Christ must step forth into the outer darkness of suffering and death.

Great tragedies are appallingly simple, the simpler the more sublime. There was no preparation between Mother and Son save that long agony of their strong souls which had underlain every sweetness and joy of those Thirty Years, and had hymned its dirge into the very fiber of their hearts. . . .

"Mother, the hour is at hand!"

And Mary stood, the Queen of sorrows, shined in the shadow of the cottage door, with the chill breath of the November morning piercing through to the desolation of her mother's heart.

Stars were fading over the crown of Tabor. Dawn haunted the shadows of the night. The white face of the Mother of God waned into the ethereal beauty of the morning. But as Jesus searched its speechless pain, the fire of His love struggled through the pallid mists, and burned like a veiled glory drifting athwart a sea of sorrow.

Then, across that golden bar came trooping a vast host, the shadows of the souls whom Jesus loved, and, numbers without number, they suppliantly crouched

¹¹ Matt. 3:3.

at the portal of Mary's heart. . . . Could she refuse them?

As the sun rose in all its splendor, Jesus smiled, and blessed her; and, blessing, turned His face unto the waiting world.

EPILOGUE

NEVER was the bond broken between Mary and her Son. Nothing, not even death, could effect their separation.

Absent though Jesus was, Mary "pondered" all His words with the luminous intelligence of her soul, and wrought them into her very being with the consuming fire of her virginal heart. Jesus lived in her and she in Him. Long before He had spoken that word to His disciples, "Abide in Me, and I in you,"¹ Mary had lived it in her life of everyday.

The human heart of Christ, in turn, found in the thought of Mary warmth and comfort for the cold and dullness of the great unfeeling world, as yet not penetrated by the grace of God.

Well Mary knew that the Jerusalem which of old had slain the prophets would now, in her stubborn pride and blindness, fill up the measure of her iniquity by persecuting her Messias. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Christ Himself was to exclaim, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wing; and thou wouldst not?"² And so Mary asked in her inmost thought: "How will it be with the world, O Lord?" And her foreboding heart replied:

¹ John 15:4.

² Matt. 23:37.

"If it reject Thee in the flesh, how shall it accept Thee in the spirit? The great, the sensual, the materialistic world! How shall its gross hands relinquish their earthly treasures to gather the spiritual riches of Thy precious word, lavished upon the stony highways of Thy royal city?"

Mary always would be nearest to the Heart of Jesus, and no son's loyalty to the woman who bore him should ever equal His. Nor are we to conclude that henceforth they were to meet no more on earth. It is not impossible, nor at all unlikely, that the footsteps of Jesus traced their way again along the winding paths that led to Mary's home, and that His hand once more lifted the worn familiar latch of her door.

The first miracle of Christ's public ministry took place in Mary's presence, and at her intercession, when otherwise His hour for manifestation to the world was yet to come. It was at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee, when at her merest hint, water was made wine, "and His disciples believed in Him."

What catches the eye in the account by St. John, who obviously was present, is the little verse added at the end: "After this He went down to Capharnaum, *He and His mother*, and His brethren, and His disciples: and they remained there not many days."³

What a new window it opens into the life of Jesus with Mary. How familiar it all sounds, and how blessed the words that must have passed between them, however few the days.

In years not far distant Mary was to possess Him once more, body and soul, humanity and Divinity, in the unsullied beauty of His Eucharistic being. Daily He

³ John 2:12.

would come to abide with her in that inner sanctuary, the chaste tabernacle of Mary's breast, where He might commune with her in accents of divine affection, and she in turn might freely pour out to Him all the love and tenderness of her own immaculate heart, imploring Him for aid in the needs of the world, for the conversion of sinners and the turning of souls to God.

From these Eucharistic trysts with Christ her spirit would draw strength to live on here below, mothering the souls of men, until clad in the robes of joy and jubilation she would at last be taken up to Heaven and crowned Queen of angels and saints. There, to the end of time, she continues to intercede for us and through her hands to disperse the graces won by Christ her Son, in whose sufferings she shared.

O Lady Mary, thy bright crown
Is no mere crown of majesty;
For with the reflex of His own
Resplendent thorns Christ circled thee.⁴

⁴ Francis Thompson.